United Nations A/C.1/59/PV.11

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Official Records

First Committee

11th meeting
Tuesday, 19 October 2004, 10 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. De Alba .... (Mexico)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda items 57 to 72 (*continued*)

Thematic discussion on item subjects and introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and international security items

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): Before we proceed with the introduction of cluster 1 draft resolutions, on nuclear weapons, I would like to give the floor to delegations that were not able to speak yesterday in the informal part of our meeting to comment on issues under the heading of nuclear weapons.

Let me recall that there will be no record of statements in the informal segment of our meeting.

The meeting was suspended at 10.15 a.m. and resumed at 10.30 a.m.

Mr. Paranhos (Brazil): On behalf of New Zealand and Brazil, I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere and adjacent areas".

Together, the five nuclear-weapon-free zones created by the Treaties of the Antarctic, Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba cover the major parts of the southern hemisphere. The States parties to those Treaties are determined to continue to contribute to the prevention of nuclear weapons in all its aspects and to the process of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control, in particular in the field of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, with a view to strengthening international peace and security in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

The important contribution made by the nuclear-weapon-free zones to international peace and security must be matched by the granting of unconditional negative security assurances to their member States. We welcome the efforts being made towards the completion of the ratification process of all the Treaties. Furthermore, we welcome the recent announcement by the Government of Mexico of the convening of an international conference of States members of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

We hope the draft resolution can count on the broadest support of member States.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Brazil for the brevity of his statement and appeal to all representatives who shall introduce draft resolutions to do so briefly, wherever possible. We all have the texts of the draft resolutions before us and I believe it would be a good practice to refer delegations to those texts, rather than to read them out. I also think statements of support for draft resolutions should be limited, especially from co-sponsors. We

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shall assume that all co-sponsors enthusiastically support the contents of the relevant draft resolution and I therefore call for moderation.

I now call on the representative of Myanmar to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.26.

Mr. Aye (Myanmar): I shall try to be as brief as possible.

I have the honour and privilege to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.26, entitled "Nuclear disarmament", on behalf of the following sponsors: Algeria, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, the Dominican Republic, Guinea, Haiti, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Kenya, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Malaysia, Mongolia, Namibia, Nepal, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Timor-Leste, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam, Zimbabwe and my own delegation, Myanmar. Additionally, Cambodia and Thailand have joined as co-sponsors.

Draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.26 is easily recognized as our traditional draft resolution, submitted annually since 1995. It is sponsored by all the countries of the Association of South-East Asian Nations and many countries of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), reflecting the views of the great majority of NAM countries.

There can be no denying that, on the issue of arms control and disarmament, the urgency of nuclear disarmament commands paramount importance. In our endeavours to create a world totally free of the menace of nuclear weapons, we need to take a step-by-step approach to reduce and ultimately eliminate such weapons. Hence, that vision of humankind is reflected in the preambular parts of the draft resolution.

The draft recalls the Final Document of the Fourteenth Ministerial Conference of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Durban, South Africa, and also reaffirms the specific mandate conferred by the General Assembly on the United Nations Disarmament Commission to discuss nuclear disarmament as one of its main substantive items.

Operative paragraph 2 reaffirms the point that nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are substantively interrelated and mutually reinforcing. It makes abundantly clear that the two processes need to be linked, as nuclear non-proliferation cannot be effectively enforced without the corresponding systemic, progressive and irreversible process of nuclear disarmament. We cannot agree with the approach of some to emphasize aspects of non-proliferation without according equal importance to nuclear disarmament.

All Members of the United Nations, barring a few, are States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and States parties have the obligation to pursue in good faith and to bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. Moreover, we attach great importance to the 13 steps for nuclear disarmament set out in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and we call on the nuclear-weapon States fully and effectively to implement those steps. Those points of great importance are reflected primarily in the operative parts of the draft resolution.

The views of the great majority of the States members of NAM are incorporated into a number of substantive paragraphs, such as in the reiteration of the call on the Conference on Disarmament to establish, on a priority basis, an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament early in 2005. Additionally, the draft resolution calls upon the Conference to commence negotiations on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament.

To emphasize the importance of reducing the nuclear danger in the present day, the draft resolution has undertaken to urge the nuclear-weapon States, as an interim measure pending their total elimination, to take further measures to reduce further the operational status of their nuclear-weapon systems, thus helping to diminish the role of nuclear weapons in strategic doctrines and security policies. Such actions will further minimize the risk of nuclear weapons' ever being used.

Pending the desired objective of the total elimination of nuclear weapons, the draft also calls upon the nuclear-weapon States to agree to an international, legally-binding instrument on a joint undertaking not to be the first to use nuclear weapons and, importantly, to conclude an internationally and legally binding instrument on security assurances of non-use and non-threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. As a relevant operative paragraph shows, those essential interim measures will no doubt assist in reducing the nuclear danger.

Another important aspect of the draft is to demonstrate the integrity of the three pillars of the NPT regime — nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy — and to stress the necessity of a positive and substantive outcome to the scheduled 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

In essence, draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.26 remains the most substantive draft resolution on the subject of nuclear disarmament, emphasizing the essential role of multilateral endeavours to achieve nuclear disarmament. It once again encompasses the many concerns of the international community and expresses the need substantively and adequately to address and overcome the dangers posed by the existence of nuclear weapons among us.

Once again, my delegation calls upon delegations to demonstrate the will to lend overwhelming support to draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.26, as they have done in previous years, and to vote in its favour when the time comes to take action on it.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Japan to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.23.

Mr. Mine (Japan): I would like to make a few introductory remarks about draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.23, which Japan has submitted to the First Committee and which is entitled "A path to the total elimination of nuclear weapons".

Japan has annually submitted a draft resolution on nuclear disarmament since 1994, reflecting relevant developments over the preceding year. The resolution has enjoyed a lot of support from the international community. Inspired by strong national sentiment in favour of the total elimination of nuclear weapons, Japan has submitted the draft resolution again this year.

The draft resolution is based on our fundamental position, which places great importance on the realization of a peaceful and safe world free of nuclear weapons through the steady application of a practical and incremental approach to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We try very hard each year to achieve a balance in our draft resolutions between nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, as well as between the evaluation of achievements and the requirements of future action. We look forward to its adoption with the support of many member States.

While I have the floor, I should like to ask for your permission, Sir, to respond to the remarks that were made yesterday by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Japan's position was clearly stated by our Prime Minister, Mr. Koizumi, at the general debate of the General Assembly:

> "The nuclear and missile issues on the Korean peninsula present a serious challenge to the peace and stability of north-east Asia and to the international community as a whole. Japan is determined to continue to seek a comprehensive resolution of the nuclear and missile issues and the abduction issue in line with the Pyongyang Declaration. The six-party talks must go forward. The benefit that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would receive by resolving those issues would be substantial. There is no benefit for it in continuing to pursue its nuclear programme." (*A/59/PV.4, p. 32*)

As the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has said in a statement published on 17 September in *Rodong Shimun*, one of its leading papers, Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea must remain committed and sincerely implement the Pyongyang Declaration.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Sweden to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.22.

Ms. Borsiin Bonnier (Sweden): I am speaking on behalf of the seven countries of the New Agenda Coalition: Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa and my own country, Sweden. I do so to introduce our draft resolution entitled "Accelerating the implementation of nuclear disarmament commitments", contained in document A/C.1/59/L.22.

If seriously pursued, nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing processes. Both are vital to international peace and security and both are fundamental for upholding the

Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the cornerstone for both nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament.

With only a few months remaining before the upcoming NPT Review Conference, and bearing in mind that the preparatory process was not able to produce substantive results, the situation looks rather bleak. We now need to generate and demonstrate strong support not only for non-proliferation, but also for nuclear disarmament. And it is absolutely crucial that we join together to safeguard and implement agreements already made and to move ahead.

One overall purpose of our draft resolution is to uphold and safeguard the NPT in its entirety, together with the commitments made at the previous two Review Conferences, including the agreed steps towards nuclear disarmament. Agreements need to be implemented or they risk falling apart, and implementation needs to be accelerated or confidence in the regime risks being undermined. Concern for the future of the regime lies behind the draft resolution's calls for full compliance with and implementation of commitments made. Moreover, our draft resolution goes beyond the NPT and addresses the entire United Nations membership.

It is also essential to utilize the remaining months before the NPT Review Conference to set in motion or accelerate the implementation of such steps where we deem action to be urgent and possible, even in this relatively short-term perspective.

Considering the overall state of affairs, we have this year opted for a short, focused and operative draft resolution, rather than for an omnibus. We have made an effort to be clear and to the point. In so doing we have also acted in the present reform spirit and we have largely relied on consensus language, much of it from the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

In conclusion, the New Agenda Coalition has made a very serious effort to arrive at a draft resolution that can generate broad support and bring the disarmament issues forward. We hope that other delegations will receive it in the same spirit and give it their support. We also welcome additional sponsors. The present situation calls for us to work together, to safeguard what we have achieved and to move forward.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of India to introduce draft resolutions A/C.1/59/L.29 and A/C.1/59/L.30).

Mr. Prasad (India): I have the honour to introduce two draft resolutions at the same time: draft resolutions A/C.1/59/L.29 and A/C.1/59/L.30.

The draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/59/L.29 is entitled "Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons" and has been sponsored by 30 countries: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Colombia, Congo, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ecuador, Egypt, Fiji, Haiti, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Kenya, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, the Sudan, Viet Nam, Zambia and India.

The draft resolution underlines that the use of nuclear weapons poses the most serious threat to the survival of mankind. It encapsulates the concerns expressed in the Kuala Lumpur summit of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), held in February last year, and the NAM ministerial meeting held in Durban in August this year.

As long as certain States claim an exclusive right to possess nuclear weapons in perpetuity, and as long as the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is justified as a legitimate guarantor of security, the threat of use of nuclear weapons by States, and now by non-State actors, will remain.

The salience of nuclear weapons will diminish if States reorient their nuclear doctrines through a commitment to no first use and non-use of nuclear weapons, backed by a legally binding agreement to that effect. That should be more feasible now than in 1982, when this resolution was first presented, with the cold war having ended and the prevalence of non-adversarial relations among the major Powers.

In its historic advisory opinion of 1996, the International Court of Justice made international humanitarian law applicable to the use of nuclear weapons. The Court stated that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable to armed conflict. It also expressed the conviction that a multilateral agreement prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons would strengthen international security and create a climate for negotiations leading to the elimination of nuclear weapons, which seems to be our universal objective.

The international community evidently needs to take decisive steps to support a legally binding instrument prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons as an interim measure until we reach agreement on a step-by-step process for elimination. That will serve to diminish the role of nuclear weapons in maintaining security, if not altogether to delegitimize nuclear weapons, and encapsulate the changes in doctrines, policies, attitudes and institutions required to usher in a nuclear-weapon-free and non-violent world.

The operative part of the draft resolution reiterates a simple call on the Conference on Disarmament to commence negotiations to reach agreement on an international convention on this subject. A positive vote for draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.29 would be a vote by the international community in favour of a decisive step towards the elimination of nuclear weapons.

I turn now to the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/59/L.30, entitled "Reducing nuclear danger" and sponsored at present by 20 countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Cuba, Fiji, Haiti, Jordan, Kenya, Lesotho, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mauritius, Namibia, the Sudan, Viet Nam, Zambia and India.

The draft resolution underlines the need to hold an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers and calls for measures to protect humankind from the catastrophic consequences of the unintentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons that can result from prevailing security doctrines and nuclear postures.

The entire membership of the United Nations agreed by consensus in 1978 that nuclear weapons pose the greatest danger to humankind and to the survival of civilization, and that effective measures of nuclear disarmament and prevention of nuclear war had the highest priority. Twenty-six years later, and more than a decade and a half after the end of the cold war, the concept of mutually assured destruction is universally judged to be anachronistic. The dictum that a nuclear war can never be won and must never be fought, enunciated by President Reagan before the General Assembly in 1983, is now accepted as conventional wisdom.

Pending nuclear disarmament, therefore, measures for reducing nuclear dangers are a *conditio sine qua non* for safeguarding humankind's collective security interests. The draft resolution refers to the seven recommendations of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters of 2001, which include preparing for a major international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear danger.

The unanimously adopted Millennium Declaration reiterated the commitment of the States Members of the United Nations to strive for the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, and to keep all options open for achieving that aim, including the possibility of convening the international conference that I referred to earlier. The draft resolution calls for building a consensus on holding that conference. It also offers modest and pragmatic proposals for the safety and security of humankind. It calls for a review of nuclear doctrines and immediate steps to reduce the risk of unintentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons.

The very real danger posed by the increased risk of systems and components falling into the hands of non-State actors has aggravated the current dangers. A positive vote for the draft resolution will be a reaffirmation by the international community of its readiness to take decisive steps towards reducing nuclear dangers.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Canada.

Mr. Meyer (Canada): I would like to introduce to the First Committee draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.34, entitled "The Conference on Disarmament decision (CD/1547) of 11 August 1998 to establish, under item 1 of its agenda entitled 'Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament', an ad hoc committee to negotiate, on the basis of the report of the Special Coordinator (CD/1299) and the mandate contained therein, a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices".

The draft resolution is identical to resolution 58/57 of 8 December 2003, adopted without a vote by this Committee and the General Assembly. It is anchored firmly in the expectations of the international community and reflects widespread support for beginning fissile material cut-off negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a treaty which would be fundamental to furthering both disarmament and non-proliferation objectives.

It remains our view that the existing mandate permits any Conference on Disarmament member to raise any issue or concern about the envisaged treaty during the course of negotiations. The text provides a vehicle for the First Committee to urge the Conference to immediately commence the negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

Canada, as custodian of the resolution, and our co-sponsors hope that the draft resolution will again be adopted without a vote.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Egypt to introduce draft resolutions A/C.1/59/L.8 and A/C.1/59/L.37.

Mrs. Elmarassy (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased, on behalf of the members of the League of Arab States, to submit a draft resolution entitled "The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East" and contained in document A/C.1/59/L.37.

The draft resolution reflects the concerns of the countries of the Middle East and of the international community as a whole over the continued existence of nuclear facilities in the region that are not under the comprehensive safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and therefore heighten the danger of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East. That danger has been stressed at the Review Conferences of the States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the most recent of which was held in 2000.

The draft resolution emphasizes the need for the relevant countries to make every effort to ensure the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and the accession of all countries of the region to the NPT and their adherence to all of its provisions. It also calls on Israel, the only State of the region that not yet become party to the NPT, to do so immediately and to place all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA safeguards. Furthermore, it requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session on the implementation of the present resolution.

I also want to present the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/59/L.8, entitled "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East", which Egypt has submitted for over 25 years and which enjoys widespread support.

The draft resolution also stresses the need for the relevant parties to adopt practical measures to ensure that the Middle East is free of nuclear weapons and to place all nuclear activities in the region under IAEA safeguards. It invites all countries of the region, pending the establishment of the nuclear-weapon-free zone, not to develop, produce, test or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or permit their stationing on their territories.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of New Zealand to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.25.

Ms. McDonald (New Zealand): We have the honour to introduce, on behalf of Australia, Mexico and New Zealand, the draft resolution entitled "Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty". The draft resolution calls once again for the signature and ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) to enable it to come into force. The draft resolution's document number is A/C.1/59/L.25.

There are a few points about the draft resolution that I would like to mention.

In the preamble to the draft resolution, we welcome the friends of the CTBT ministerial meeting, which was held last month during the General Assembly's general debate, and the statement that was issued by the ministers in support of the CTBT and its early entry into force.

We draw attention to operative paragraph 3, which underlines the need to maintain momentum towards completion of the verification regime. We recognize that only upon entry into force will the CTBT and its global verification regime be fully operational, but it continues to be a point of frustration that, in a world so bereft of effective verification provisions on weapons of mass destruction, that strong Treaty still has not entered into force.

Setting aside such frustrations, we believe that, during this set-up stage, the international monitoring system has real value in supporting global stability. That unprecedented network of monitoring stations, laboratories and the International Nuclear Data Centre in Vienna should, when completed, have the ability to detect nuclear explosions anywhere. It is important that we back our political support for the Treaty by assisting where we can in the practical build-up of the international monitoring system.

Operative paragraph 8 is new. It requests the Secretary-General to prepare a report on the efforts of States parties towards universalization of the Treaty and possibilities for providing assistance on ratification procedures to States that request it. We have been encouraged by the substantial efforts of many countries to encourage ratifications in their own regions and beyond. We believe that such a report will provide more focus on where our universalization efforts could best be directed in the future, and that it will help to identify where assistance is available to those who may need it.

Throughout the text of the draft resolution, we have strengthened the calls on non-member States to join the CTBT. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the cornerstone of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, was extended indefinitely in 1995 largely on the basis of the renewed commitment by the nuclear-weapon States to completing the CTBT and pursuing the objectives of article VI. The fulfilment of that commitment is now long overdue.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Malaysia to introduce draft resolutions A/C.1/59/L.39.

Mr. Rahman (Malaysia): My delegation is pleased to introduce to the Committee a draft resolution entitled "Follow-up to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*", as contained in document A/C.1/59/L.39.

The draft resolution is sponsored by 45 countries. My delegation expresses its gratitude to all sponsors, as well as to those delegations that may decide to co-sponsor or support the draft resolution.

Developments in the field of nuclear disarmament over the past year can be described as rather disheartening. In his report on the work of the Organization, the Secretary-General has observed that the

> "slow pace of disarmament, violations of non-proliferation commitments, evidence of a clandestine nuclear network and the threat of terrorism" (*A/59/1, para. 69*)

are some of the several challenges that, if left unchecked, could undermine international peace and security and increase the risk of new instances of unilateral or pre-emptive use of force.

My delegation and the sponsors of the draft resolution concur with him. It is crucial that favourable conditions be created for the further advancement of the global nuclear disarmament process. Large stocks of nuclear weapons remain in the arsenals of the nuclear-weapon States. Furthermore, nuclear-weapon States are continuing with plans to develop new nuclear weapons and for their possible use in future military conflicts.

The sponsors feel compelled to reiterate that the Final Document of the first special session on disarmament underscores that general and complete disarmament under effective international control is the ultimate goal of multilateral disarmament efforts. That goal is far from being achieved. States Members of the United Nations agreed at the special session that nuclear weapons pose the greatest danger to humankind and to the survival of human civilization.

Today all States remain in full agreement with that conclusion, which was made almost three decades ago. In that connection, we call on member States to implement, in good faith and without further delay, the provisions of the draft resolution upon its adoption, in accordance with the resolve expressed by our leaders at the Millennium Summit, as well as with our treaty obligations to strive for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

In submitting the draft resolution for the consideration of member States for the ninth consecutive year, my delegation and the sponsors are confident that it will continue to receive the support of a large majority of member States. We are confident that States that support multilateral negotiations will heed the views of the overwhelming majority inside and outside the Assembly and seek to join us in our collective endeavour towards the global elimination of nuclear weapons.

Once again, my delegation expresses its sincere appreciation to the sponsors, as well as to the delegations that will vote in favour of the draft resolution.

Mr. Canchola (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation wishes to introduce the draft decision contained in document A/C.1/59/L.15 and entitled "United Nations conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers in the context of disarmament".

As a follow-up to the 2001 Millennium Declaration, the Mexican delegation submitted a draft resolution to this Committee whereby there would be convened, by 2006 at the latest, a United Nations conference to identify appropriate ways of eliminating nuclear dangers in the context of nuclear disarmament. In the current context, the need to convene such a conference is even clearer, among other vital reasons, in order to confront in a multilateral framework the dangers posed by the risk of non-State actors gaining access to weapons of mass destruction. That is why the international community must move with greater resolve to find ways of countering that threat.

For that reason, my delegation has again decided, as it has in the past, to submit a draft decision that, by keeping the matter on the agenda of the First Committee, reaffirms the intention to continue find space for consultations that will allow us to reach agreement on the possible convening of the important conference.

Next year, there will be an assessment of compliance with the provisions of the Millennium Declaration. In that context, my delegation believes it is urgent that we redouble our efforts to make progress in implementing the agreements reached at the Summit — in other words,

> "to strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, and to keep all options open for achieving this aim, including the possibility of convening an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers". (*resolution 55/2, para. 9*)

My delegation hopes that the draft decision contained in document A/C.1/59/L.15 will enjoy strong support from the delegations of the First Committee.

Mr. Maandi (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Nuclear weapons are a serious threat to international peace and security. Ever since 1946, the date of the adoption of the first resolution calling for nuclear disarmament, nuclear weapons, rather than being rejected and renounced, have continued to gain prominence in military doctrines and to accumulate in number, thereby exacerbating the threat of humankind's extinction.

The elimination of those fearsome devices is a binding legal obligation that must be met. Their abolition would strengthen international security, establish a climate of detente, free humankind from the threat of annihilation and release considerable financial resources to the economic and social development of all. It would also make it possible for us to join together in effectively addressing the new challenges and threats of terrorism, poverty, epidemics and global warming.

The nuclear-weapon States, which bear primary responsibility for that task, must take measures commensurate to that threat. Any such action must involve a global approach and requires total commitment to making progress in nuclear disarmament irreversible.

The delegation of Algeria wishes to express its support here for the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/59/L.26, entitled "Nuclear disarmament", which was introduced by the representative of Myanmar and which my delegation has co-sponsored since it was first introduced. We also reiterate our firm conviction that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is more than ever before the highest priority and that security is one and indivisible and must therefore benefit all.

It is therefore high time to establish a system of collective security that is independent of military theories and doctrines of deterrence that the cold war revealed to be outmoded. Today, nothing can justify ongoing reliance on obsolete doctrinal references that hinder the progress of the disarmament process.

The vast difficulties facing the nuclear disarmament process and the basic interest and important role accorded by security policies to nuclear weapons are dismaying because, first, they call into question the commitments undertaken in the area of nuclear disarmament and infringe upon the principle of the equal security for all; secondly, they give rise to the qualitative development and improvement of new types of weapons and create an atmosphere of distrust and further accelerate the arms race; thirdly, they attest to the erroneous interpretation and selective implementation of conventions and treaties; and fourthly, they encourage other countries to opt for nuclear weapons to ensure their own security in the name of the doctrine of deterrence, which, unfortunately, remains with us today.

The unequivocal and historic commitment that was undertaken under article VI at the sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 2000 must be implemented immediately. We hope that the forthcoming NPT Review Conference will preserve those gains, find ways to ensure its full implementation and allow article VI to lead to the conclusion of other international agreements that would assist in the full dismantling of nuclear weapons based on the restoration of a multilateral framework. It should also relaunch the Disarmament Commission, the sole multilateral disarmament body, and break the deadlock in that body so that it can begin in good faith and without delay, negotiations to ensure the elimination of those especially lethal weapons as a priority task.

Nuclear disarmament must not be limited to countering horizontal nuclear proliferation. Horizontal nuclear non-proliferation would be insufficient to building international peace and security without real and effective nuclear disarmament. The vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons, which runs counter to the spirit and letter of the NPT, has not been pursued and nuclear arsenals still exist. And yet, the world today has little room for weaponry and requires solidarity and cooperation.

The draft resolution on nuclear disarmament before us advocates nuclear disarmament. It is based on the clear and bold perception of nuclear weapons that the international community expressed through its resolutions on disarmament in 1946. It calls for the effective implementation of the 13 steps endorsed at the sixth NPT Review Conference, in particular the commitment undertaken by the nuclear-weapon States to proceeding to the total elimination of their arsenals. The draft resolution recognizes that the conditions now exist to create a world free from nuclear weapons and reflects the belief that it is genuinely necessary to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in security policies so as to facilitate their elimination. The draft resolution proposes a series of relevant and practical measures to chart the way towards the implementation of our objective of eliminating nuclear weapons.

My delegation believes that the convening of an international conference on nuclear disarmament, the establishment in 2005 of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, the opening of negotiations to draft a fissile material cut-off treaty, and the conclusion, pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, of a legal and binding instrument on security guarantees are all conducive measures for the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

My delegation reaffirms, through its support for the draft resolution, its resolute dedication to the elimination of nuclear weapons, the sole reliable approach for future generations. We are similarly pleased to affirm my delegation's full support for the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/59/L.39 on the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, which was introduced by the representative of Malaysia and which my country has co-sponsored ever since its first submission to the First Committee. It emphasizes the Court's unanimous conclusion that the there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and to bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control, and urgently calls on all States immediately to fulfil that obligation.

My delegation asks for the full support of all delegations for the two draft resolutions.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Uzbekistan to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.7.

Mr. Kayumov (Uzbekistan): On behalf of the five Central Asian States of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, I would like to introduce the draft decision on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia, contained in document A/C.1/59/L.7.

Several General Assembly resolutions and decisions have been adopted on that subject since the inception of the initiative. In adopting those documents by consensus, the international community has indicated its unequivocal support for that proposal. We thank the delegations that voiced their support for the establishment of a Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone during the general debate.

For almost seven years since the adoption of the first General Assembly resolution on that issue, the States of the region have been able to work out a draft treaty on the establishment of the zone and a protocol of negative security assurances by nuclear-weapon

States. For the time being, the States of the region are in the midst of consultations with nuclear-weapon States on those drafts. We very much hope that the Central Asian and nuclear-weapon States will find an appropriate compromise that will make the creation of a new nuclear-weapon-free zone a possibility.

On behalf of our five countries, allow me to express our sincere hope that the draft resolution will find the support of all delegations and be adopted by consensus.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Chile to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.50.

Mr. Winter (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is my honour, on behalf of 113 sponsors, to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.50, entitled "Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation".

The draft resolution is brief and general in nature. Its simple objective is to welcome the Hague Code of Conduct, which currently has 117 signatories. As is widely known, the Hague Code of Conduct is an instrument that serves as a political reference point. It is not legally binding and its essential intent is to implement measures of transparency and confidence-building regarding programmes, policies and the launching of ballistic missiles and means of space delivery.

In its preambular part, the draft expresses the General Assembly's concern about the regional and global security challenges caused, inter alia, by the proliferation of ballistic missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction. It confirms the General Assembly's commitment to the Declaration on International Cooperation in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space for the Benefit and in the Interest of All States, Taking into Particular Account the Needs of Developing Countries, as contained in the annex to its resolution 51/122 of 13 December 1996. It also recognizes that States should not be excluded from utilizing the benefits of space for peaceful purposes, but that, in reaping such benefits and in conducting related cooperation, they must not contribute to the proliferation of ballistic missiles capable of carrying weapons of mass destruction.

Mindful of all that, the General Assembly would, by the draft, welcome the adoption of the Hague Code of Conduct and invite all States that have not yet subscribed to the Code to do so. It would also encourage the exploration of further ways and means to deal effectively with the problem of the proliferation of ballistic missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction.

Given the aforementioned aspects of the draft resolution, we hope that it can be adopted without a vote and, given the number of sponsors – 113 as of now – that it can be channelled through to adoption as soon as possible.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Pakistan to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.44.

Mr. Umer (Pakistan): It is my great pleasure to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/59/L.44, entitled "Conclusion of effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons". I make this introduction on behalf of the delegations of Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Colombia, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, El Salvador, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Malaysia, Myanmar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Viet Nam, Zambia and my own delegation.

The provision of security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States is an obligation that arises from the Charter of the United Nations. The Charter obliges Member States not to use or threaten the use of force. That obligation extends to the non-use of and non-threat of use of any weapons, including nuclear weapons. Indeed, that fact was underlined by the resolution adopted by the General Assembly at its first session, which outlawed nuclear weapons.

The demand for security assurances was raised by the non-nuclear-weapon States in the 1960s and it crystallized in 1968 during the concluding phase of the negotiations for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The response of the nuclear-weapon States, reflected in Security Council resolution 255 (1968) was considered to be inadequate by the non-nuclear-weapon States. At the first special session of the General Assembly on disarmament, an agreement was reached for the conclusion of an international instrument that would be provide binding and credible negative security assurances to the non-nuclear-weapon States. However, the declarations made by four of the five nuclear-weapon States at the special session and later at the NPT Extension Conference, and reflected in Security Council resolution 984 (1995), were also considered insufficient, qualified and partial by most non-nuclear-weapon States.

At the end of cold war, there was a general expectation that it would become easier to extend negative security assurances to the non-nuclear-weapon States. Unfortunately, the situation, instead of becoming easier, has become more complex, for several reasons.

First, with the indefinite extension of the NPT, most nuclear-weapon States have presumed the permanent right to retain nuclear weapons. Secondly, the commitment to complete nuclear disarmament in article VI of the NPT has remained open-ended even after the undertakings, which were widely welcomed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference, for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Thirdly, the geographical scope for the use of nuclear weapons has also expanded with the expansion of nuclear alliances and the operationalization of provisions for sharing nuclear weapons and command and control among alliance members. Briefly, new doctrines, including the possible use of nuclear weapons that are contrary to resolutions 255 (1968) and 984 (1995) of the Security Council, have been propounded. And finally, two additional nuclear weapon States have emerged on the world scene.

Under those circumstances, the conclusion of credible negative security assurances to non-nuclear weapon States has gained greater urgency. The sponsors of draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.44 seek to underline and to operationalize this sense of urgency. This draft resolution is similar to texts adopted at previous sessions by this Committee. Its contents are self-evident, obviating the need for me to review its various provisions. For the above reasons, the sponsors believe that the conclusion of effective arrangements on negative security assurances could constitute a major confidence-building measure in the current tense international situation between the nuclear and the non-nuclear-weapon States.

Secondly, the draft resolution could contribute to reducing nuclear dangers; it could also alleviate the threats which arise from new doctrines of nuclear use and would facilitate negotiations for non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. It is therefore the hope of the sponsors that this draft resolution will be adopted with the widest possible support.

Mr. Rahman (Malaysia): I have the honour to table on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) its first draft resolution in the Committee entitled, "Measures to uphold the authority of the 1925 Geneva Protocol", as contained in document A/C.1/59/L.12, dated 19 October 2004. We propose to table this draft resolution under agenda item 65 (d) of the same name. As the Committee would recall, a resolution on this question was adopted by consensus two years ago at the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

I should like to begin by reaffirming and reiterating the commitment of the NAM to promoting international peace and security through disarmament measures. Our position on disarmament and international security issues are reflected clearly in the decisions made at the thirteenth Conference of Heads of State or Government of NAM, held in Kuala Lumpur from 20 to 25 February 2003. This position was reiterated most recently at the Fourteenth Ministerial Conference of NAM in Durban from 17 to 19 August 2004. NAM would also like to strongly reaffirm its view that multilateralism and multilaterally agreed solutions in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations provide the only sustainable way to address disarmament and international security issues.

The draft resolution entitled, "Measures to uphold the authority of the 1925 Geneva Protocol", inter alia, recalls the longstanding determination of the international community to ban chemical and biological weapons. It welcomes the initiative taken by three or more States parties to the 1925 Geneva Protocol in withdrawing their reservations, as contained in document A/59/179. It also renews the previous call by the General Assembly for all States to strictly observe the principles, objectives and prohibitions of that Protocol and calls on those States that continue to maintain their reservations to the Protocol to withdraw them. We trust that this draft resolution will be adopted with the widest possible support as in the previous sessions of the General Assembly.

Finally, may I state that the NAM believes in the vital importance of multilateralism and multilaterally agreed solutions in addressing disarmament and international security issues. The draft resolution that the NAM has just introduced is submitted for the consideration of this Committee in that spirit. We are confident that, in that same spirit, it will continue to receive the support of Member States. We are certain that its adoption and implementation will facilitate efforts currently underway by the international community to ban chemical and biological weapons, thereby contributing to a much safer and more peaceful world.

At this juncture, on behalf of the members of the NAM, may I express our sincere appreciation to the delegations that support our draft resolution. We welcome comments to improve the text, as well as additional sponsorship of the draft resolution. I should also like to inform the Committee that my delegation will be tabling six more NAM-sponsored draft resolutions in the course of this week.

Mr. Baidinejad (Islamic Republic of Iran): I have taken the floor to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.6 entitled, "Missiles". In addition to my country, Egypt and Indonesia are also sponsors of the draft resolution.

Since the introduction of this item on the agenda of the General Assembly in 1999, increasing support has been given to addressing the issue of missiles in all its aspects in the United Nations. The Panel of Governmental Experts on the Issue of Missiles in All its Aspects was able to submit its report — the first of its kind in the history of the United Nations — in which it addressed the issue of missiles in all its aspects. The success of the first Panel opened prospects for exploring further ways and means of dealing with that issue within the United Nations. Unfortunately, the second Panel of Governmental Experts was not similarly successful. The Secretary-General, in paragraph 5 of his report to the General Assembly (A/59/278), stated that, "given the complexity of the issues at hand, no consensus was reached on the preparation of a final report".

As we have stated before, such a situation prompts us to work more seriously and with dedication and better preparation, to address this highly important issue in the future. We should acknowledge that our work in this regard is in the initial stages of a longer process and will yield fruit if we approach the issue in a spirit of good faith and with focused attention. To that end, it is imperative to redouble our efforts to advance the issue of missiles within the framework of the United Nations for the sake of a safer and better future.

The draft resolution this year concentrates on planning our future steps to address missiles within the forum of the United Nations. The draft resolution, in its operative paragraph 3, suggests the establishment of a third Panel of Governmental Experts in 2007-2008 with a more specific mandate of exploring further ways and means to address within the United Nations the issue of missiles in all its aspects, including identifying areas where consensus can be reached. This mandate, in contrast with the mandates of previous Panels, which were general in nature, has been narrowed down for the purpose of enabling the Governmental experts to be more specific and focused in their discussions. The time frame of two years is intended to provide more time to the experts to enable them to have thorough and sufficient discussions. In the meantime, operative paragraph 2 of the draft suggests that a study should be made by the Secretary-General in 2006, with the support of qualified consultants and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. The report would concentrate on identifying areas in which consensus could be reached. We believe that the United Nations study would constitute an important and in-depth analysis of the issue and, without committing States with regard to its findings, could be helpful to Member States and particularly to the third Panel of Governmental Experts as useful input.

As before, we expect that good support will be given to this draft resolution.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): We have thus concluded the introduction of draft resolutions under cluster 1, nuclear disarmament.

If there is no other request for the floor, we shall now proceed to consider segment 2 of the agenda, which includes two clusters: other weapons of mass destruction and the militarization of outer space. It is my intention to divide the statements so that we will follow a logic in the development of the discussion. In that connection, I shall first offer the floor to delegations that wish to speak on the subject of other weapons of mass destruction. When we have completed the corresponding list, I shall give the floor to delegations wishing to refer to the subject of outer space.

Mr. Sanders (Netherlands): With regard to what you have just said, Mr. Chairman, I will make two statements on behalf of the European Union — the first on other weapons of mass destruction and the second on outer space. I understand that you wish me to make those statements separately and to wait to speak on outer space until we consider that cluster. I will comply with your request, although my original feeling was that, in the interests of efficiency, I might deliver both statements together. But you are our boss, so I will obey your orders. Right now, I will speak on other weapons of mass destruction.

I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Turkey; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; and the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement regarding the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) and the issue of ballistic missiles, including the Hague Code of Conduct against the Proliferation of Ballistic Missiles.

The EU is of the opinion that the CWC is a unique disarmament and non-proliferation instrument whose strict application must be fully guaranteed. The BTWC is the cornerstone of our efforts to prevent biological agents and toxins from being developed as weapons. The EU supports and promotes wholeheartedly the universal adherence to and implementation of the objectives laid down in those treaties. We are equally supportive of the organization that is facilitating the implementation of and ensuring compliance with the CWC — the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in The Hague.

In strong support of the goal of universality, the EU has carried out, within the framework of its common position, démarches to most States not party to those treaties, and we welcome those States — including some of our close neighbours — that have recently become parties to the CWC and the BTWC. The threat of the possible use of chemical and biological weapons by non-State actors has become real. Those treaties, if universally adopted and fully implemented and complied with, can play an important role in countering that threat. The EU will therefore continue to stress the importance of those treaties in its relations with third countries.

In the EU Strategy against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, adopted in December 2003, we identified a number of concrete actions in support of promoting and reinforcing the CWC and the BTWC. The EU is now in the process of implementing the Strategy, and I would like to mention a few concrete actions taken so far.

The EU is finalizing a joint action with the OPCW that would allow for the provision of financial support to OPCW programmes in the area of universality, national implementation and international cooperation in the field of chemical activities. The EU will also consider, within the framework of its cooperative threat-reduction efforts, providing support to OPCW States facing administrative or financial difficulties in their implementation of the CWC.

The Strategy against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction underlines the importance of the challenge inspection mechanism in the context of the CWC. The EU is promoting the instrument of challenge inspections within the framework of the CWC and beyond. A few months ago, Austria organized and hosted an EU seminar on challenge inspections that concluded in an EU action plan on that subject, which will further raise overall awareness of the procedural and practical issues surrounding challenge inspections. The EU believes that the OPCW Technical Secretariat must be well prepared and equipped to conduct a challenge inspection. That issue is now addressed in the competent bodies of the CWC as well as in the context of political dialogue with third States.

In our Strategy against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, the EU has indicated that it will take the lead in efforts to strengthen regulations on the trade in material that can be used for the production of biological weapons. The EU will also take the lead in supporting national implementation of the BTWC — for example, in providing technical assistance. As a follow-up to last year's Meeting of States Parties, the EU will consider giving support to States experiencing administrative or financial difficulties in their national implementation of the BTWC. The EU is considering setting up a roster of legal experts similar to the one set up by the OPCW for the CWC to assist countries in the drafting of legislation.

Since the BTWC does not at present contain a verification mechanism, the EU will try to find ways to strengthen compliance with the Convention. In that context, we fully support the intersessional programme of work for the years 2003-2005 in Geneva. However, the EU remains committed to developing measures to verify compliance with the BTWC, and we believe it would be an appropriate subject for consideration by the Review Conference with a view to identifying further action. The EU would also welcome further discussion on the proposal to review and update the existing mechanism under the Secretary-General for investigating cases of the alleged use of biological weapons or suspicious outbreaks of disease — which was established on the basis of General Assembly resolution 42/37C of 1987 and endorsed by the Assembly in 1990 in its resolution 45/57 — in order to render that mechanism more operational.

In the view of the EU, the two topics under consideration at this year's meetings in the context of the BTWC are important elements for the strengthening of the Convention. The EU would like to express its satisfaction with the comprehensive exchange of information that took place at the Meeting of Experts, held in July this year. At that Meeting, EU member States made clear their support of the existing verification mechanisms and systems, including existing mechanisms for the investigation of alleged use. At the Meeting, EU member States also made clear their support for the work of the World Health Organization, the World Organization for Animal Health and the Food and Agricultural Organization aimed at preventing and monitoring outbreaks of diseases. The EU already works together closely with those organizations on an number of issues and we intend to intensify our cooperation in the future. The EU strongly favours a substantive outcome of the forthcoming Meeting of States Parties.

In addressing the problem of ballistic missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation has, since its adoption in 2002, become an important element of the global non-proliferation regime. There are 115 countries that have subscribed to the Code, and more countries are seriously considering taking that step soon.

The EU supports the Hague Code of Conduct, the only normative instrument in the field of ballistic missile proliferation. We remain deeply convinced that the Code of Conduct constitutes the most concrete initiative in the fight against the proliferation of ballistic missiles and offers the best chance of producing tangible results in the short term. This includes the right of every State to reap the benefits of the peaceful use of outer space.

The Hague Code of Conduct is an initial, though essential, step to effectively address the problem of missile proliferation from a multilateral global perspective, without precluding other initiatives or, in the longer term, more comprehensive approaches.

For the first time in this Committee, support is being sought for submitting a draft resolution on the subject of the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, and our colleague from Chile just spoke on that issue before the start of discussions on this cluster.

That draft resolution would introduce the Hague Code of Conduct in a transparent way into the wider framework of the United Nations. The EU is committed to promoting a closer relationship between the Code and the United Nations system.

In line with the aforementioned, as well as the EU's global and multilateral approach when dealing with non-proliferation issues, the EU will fully support this draft resolution, and all EU member States will sponsor it. We call upon all other delegations to do likewise.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ambassador Sanders of the Netherlands for the flexibility he has shown in agreeing to divide up his intervention on behalf of the European Union. He will be the first speaker in the second segment, devoted to outer space.

Mr. Lew Kwang-chul (Republic of Korea): My delegation would like to express its appreciation to the representative of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for his detailed briefing on the achievements made in the field of chemical weapons and on the tasks that lie ahead for the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

The political declaration that was agreed by consensus at the First Review Conference of the CWC reaffirmed the basis of the chemical weapons ban, as embodied in the Convention's provisions. We are pleased to note that significant progress has been made in the two action plans adopted at the Review Conference. One plan deals with national implementation of the Convention; the other deals with its universality. Without universal adherence to the Convention, the ultimate goal of a chemical-weapons-free world cannot be achieved.

My delegation welcomes the accession to the Convention of six additional countries since last year, including Libya, and we call upon all States that have not yet done so to accede to the Convention without further delay.

My delegation wishes to lend its full support to this year's draft resolution (A/C.1/59/L.16), which bolsters the three pillars of the Convention and reflects progress made since the First Review Conference on universalization, full and effective implementation and technical cooperation. Furthermore, universality is necessary to cope with the increasing threat of terrorism through the use of chemical weapons and other risks associated with the proliferation of dangerous chemical materials. In that regard, we appreciate the continuous contribution of the OPCW to the work of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee and welcome its readiness to further contribute by providing technical assistance and advice within the context of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

This year's Meeting of Experts on the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) offered a valuable opportunity for useful discussions on two important topical subjects, the first on enhancing international capabilities for responding to, investigating and mitigating the effects of cases of the alleged use of biological or toxin weapons or suspicious outbreaks of disease, the second on strengthening and broadening national and international institutional efforts and existing mechanisms for the surveillance, detection, diagnosis and combating of infectious diseases affecting humans, animals and plants.

We look forward to the continuation of successful experts' meetings and annual meetings, pending the Sixth Review Conference in 2006. The lack of verification protocols should not serve as justification for any State party to the BWC to fail to equip itself with effective measures at the national level. It is necessary to take adequate steps to translate the prohibitions of the BWC into action through all legislative, administrative and regulatory means.

Multilateral arms control and non-proliferation agreements should not remain static; rather, they should grow increasingly stronger and more efficient in the fight against new and emerging threats. In order for the BWC to become a viable and resilient mechanism, the assessment of the developments affecting its objectives and operations must be evaluated periodically. In that regard, we recognize the increasing need to address the ever expanding threat posed by biological weapons in the current international security environment.

Mr. Costea (Romania): Romania aligns itself with the statement of the European Union (EU), just delivered by Ambassador Chris Sanders of the Netherlands. While fully sharing the EU's policy, objectives and démarches in this area, we would like to briefly highlight our national contribution with respect to their fulfilment.

The so-called other weapons of mass destruction, namely, chemical and biological weapons, continue to pose threats to international security and stability, in spite of the multilateral agreements prohibiting the production and use of such weapons.

This is not because the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) or the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) have failed at their ultimate purposes. As we heard at the 4th meeting of this Committee, held two weeks ago, from the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW),

> "the OPCW is moving decisively from being a new organization still in the early stages of fulfilling its mandate to being a mature one with a solid and widely recognized record of achievement and the increasing support of the international community".

Romania attaches particular importance to OPCW activity and continues to contribute to the promotion of its core objectives, mainly CWC universalization and national implementation. In this last instance, our country hosted the third meeting of National Authorities of the Eastern European States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention from 17 to 19 May 2004. Representatives of 25 national authorities from all regions of the world, as well as from international organizations such as the World Customs Organization and the European Chemical Industry Council, discussed the practical actions needed to fulfil the objectives of the OPCW article VII action plan on enhancing the effectiveness of the CWC's national implementation measures.

The status of the Convention's implementation in Eastern Europe was reviewed, focusing on the requirements for legislative and administrative provisions to monitor and to declare scheduled chemicals. Participants shared their experience in this topical area, further strengthening the cooperative network established to provide implementation support to individual States parties.

In that context, the United States of America and Romania launched an assistance programme for the implementation of the Convention. It involves software to be made available to all national authorities in need of legal and practical support in the process of implementing CWC provisions.

With regard to the BWC, Romania shares the conviction that the programme of work for the period 2003-2005 will significantly strengthen the BWC. The new format facilitates the exchange of views, experience and best practices at the expert level and may result in common understanding and concrete recommendations, which is the necessary input for the 2006 Review Conference. Romanian authorities will continue to actively follow up that new process with a view to improving the national legislation and the mechanisms necessary for implementation of the BWC. An ad hoc interministerial group was established in my country to coordinate internal BWC-related activities.

In today's environment, overshadowed by incidents such as the 2001 anthrax letters, not only has the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction become an imminent threat but also, more specifically, terrorists' access to and use of chemical and biological weapons have proven to be a frightening possibility.

Against that background, Romania welcomes the suitable responses of the international community, such as through Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), and we hope that we will soon witness its concrete results in preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction to non-State actors.

We are looking forward to the decisions and measures that the First Committee will adopt in order to further strengthen norms against the proliferation and the use of chemical and biological weapons, with particular focus on terrorists and terror groups.

Mr. Paranhos (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am taking the floor on behalf of the expanded Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR). The countries of MERCOSUR — Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay — and the associated countries Bolivia, Chile and Peru reaffirm our commitment to the disarmament and non-proliferation objectives of Chemical Weapons Convention. We support the efforts of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to achieve universalization of the Convention and full compliance with its provisions. We also express our satisfaction at the recent accession of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to the Convention. It should be recalled that, in its paragraph 8, Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) calls upon all States

> "To promote the universal adoption and full implementation, and, where necessary, strengthening of multilateral treaties to which they are parties, whose aim is to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, biological or chemical weapons".

We reiterate our call for the ongoing improvement of the mechanism for verification, and we urge States parties to continue to contribute financial, technical and human resources to attain that objective.

Although there has been a reduction in chemical arsenals, we reiterate our appeal to possessor countries to destroy them as soon as possible. Any delay in destruction affects the important work being done in the area of the Convention.

Likewise, we must continue to enhance the mechanisms for strengthening international cooperation to ensure that developing countries can create and implement national measures to meet their commitments under the Convention without negatively affecting the development of an autonomous chemical industry.

At the regional level, the members of MERCOSUR and Bolivia, Chile and Peru consider that the Convention is a sufficient tool to fight the proliferation of chemical weapons. It is necessary to redouble efforts to achieve greater cooperation in border and customs controls. In that context, there was a technical meeting of national customs authorities from 6 to 8 September, in Buenos Aires, on practical aspects of transfer regulations in connection with implementation of the Convention. It was attended by representatives of 44 States parties, international organizations and the chemical industry, with a view to discussing the problems involved in customs controls and the import and export of chemical substances. That type of meeting demonstrates the great commitment of the authorities of the organization's member States to implement the Convention's objectives.

Mr. Al-Shafi (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): As this is the first time that I am taking the floor, I am pleased to join preceding speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election to chair the First Committee. I wish you every success in your work.

In previous resolutions, in particular resolution 58/34, the General Assembly urged all parties directly concerned to consider seriously taking the practical measures required for the implementation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East. While awaiting the establishment of that zone, the countries of the region should solemnly declare that they will refrain from producing or acquiring or possessing nuclear weapons or explosives, not place their nuclear weapons on the territory of third parties, ensure their compliance with the guidelines of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), declare their support for establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone and deposit such declarations with the Security Council for consideration.

In paragraphs 10 and 11 of resolution 58/34, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to pursue consultations with the States of the region and other concerned States in order to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and requested him to submit a report on that subject at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

The delegation of Qatar insists that the States of the region must comply with the basic provisions of that resolution and other relevant resolutions. We welcome initiatives for general and complete disarmament, including in the Middle East, in particular initiatives to declare the Middle East a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

Given Qatar's commitment to international agreements, we have undertaken to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), adopted on 10 September 1996. Qatar continues to reaffirm in international forums its sincere wish to see the Middle East made a nuclear-weapon-free zone and a zone free of weapons of mass destruction.

We recall the address of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar to the General Assembly at the current session, on 21 September. He stressed the need to make the Middle East, without exception, a nuclear-weapon-free zone and a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in order to ensure the security, stability and prosperity of all countries of the region.

Qatar considers that other States of the region that are parties to disarmament treaties and agreements must abide by their commitment to strengthen international peace and security, consolidate stability and democracy and improve relations among the States of the region. This, however, can be done only if Israel accedes to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), submits all its nuclear facilities to the comprehensive safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and abides by Security Council resolution 487 (1981). That resolution explicitly demands that Israel immediately place its nuclear facilities under the supervision of the safeguards regime of the IAEA. We encourage Member States to exert pressure on Israel to abide by the wishes of the international community and to implement the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. Israel is the sole State in the Middle East which has not yet signed the NPT and which has not yet submitted its nuclear facilities to international verification and control. This is contributing to insecurity in the region, which is continually threatened by those lethal weapons.

Last but not least, Qatar considers that accession by States to disarmament treaties and conventions and the commitment to abide by them can guarantee regional and international peace and security. Qatar welcomes all initiatives aimed at achieving general and complete disarmament, particularly in the Middle East. We insist that the Middle East be a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction. We also insist on the importance of the role of the United Nations to that end.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): If there are no other delegations wishing to take the floor on the subject of other weapons of mass destruction, I shall now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands to speak on the subject of outer space.

Mr. Sanders (Netherlands): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Turkey, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and as well as the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

The EU is conscious of the growing involvement of the international community in outer space activities for development and progress, and is actively cooperating in various space initiatives. Such activities should be developed in a peaceful environment. An arms race in outer space should be prevented.

Since it is our belief that the Conference on Disarmament is the only international multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament, it is within the Conference on Disarmament that any decision should be taken regarding work on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

The EU supports the establishment of a subsidiary body at the Conference on Disarmament to deal with this matter on the basis of a mandate which will be the subject of an agreement by all.

Mr. Hu Xiaodi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to make a thematic statement on outer space. The peaceful use of outer space is in the interests of all peoples of the world. Undertakings in such areas as communication, navigation, meteorology, remote sensing, culture and disaster reduction have come to be inextricably linked with the peaceful use of outer space.

However, as nuclear materials can be used both as a clean and efficient energy source and for making nuclear weapons, outer space both benefits all countries and, at the same time, remains a potential source of fresh military confrontations and threats. With the rapid development of outer space technology, outer space, once deemed a far frontier, has been increasingly viewed in terms of its military value. Belligerent theories and concepts such as the control of outer space, power projection into and through outer space and research and development of outer space weapons have found their way into implementation. It is no exaggeration to say that outer space could become the fourth battleground, after land, sea and air, if we sit on our hands watching these developments unfold.

The deployment of weapons in outer space would result in a series of grave repercussions, destroying strategic balances of power and stability, undermining international and national security, damaging existing arms control treaties, particularly agreements related to nuclear weapons and missiles, and triggering an arms race.

In addition, the deployment and use of weapons in outer space would seriously threaten the security of outer space assets and bring harm to the earth's biosphere. The testing of outer space weapons in low orbits around earth would aggravate the already acute problem of space debris.

Facing the risk of the weaponization of — and an arms race in — outer space, the existing international legal regime related to outer space has revealed its limitations. It fails to prevent and prohibit the deployment and use of weapons other than those of mass destruction in outer space and the use or threat of use of force from the earth's surface against outer space objects.

Over the years, the international community has endeavoured on many fronts to prevent the weaponization of — and an arms race in — outer space. The Conference on Disarmament in Geneva set up an ad hoc committee for 10 consecutive years, from 1985 to 1994, to discuss the issues involved. The General Assembly has, for many years and without interruption, overwhelmingly adopted, without any negative vote, resolutions on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. The Secretary-General and many other people of insight have repeated their calls for attention to this issue. Canada, Sri Lanka, France, Sweden, Italy and many other countries have also come up with their own constructive proposals.

In 2002, the delegations of China and the Russian Federation, along with the delegations of Viet Nam, Indonesia, Belarus, Zimbabwe and the Syrian Arab Republic, based in Geneva, submitted in the Conference on Disarmament a working paper entitled "Possible elements for a future international legal agreement on the prevention of the deployment of weapons in outer space, the threat or use of force against outer space objects" (CD/1679). It is our hope that the Conference on Disarmament can use this document as a basis for negotiating and concluding a new outer space legal instrument.

This document prohibits the following basic actions: placing in orbit around the earth any object carrying any kind of weapons; installing such weapons on celestial bodies; stationing such weapons in outer space in any other manner; resorting to the threat or use of force against outer space objects; and encouraging other States, groups of States or international organizations to participate in activities prohibited by this proposed treaty.

This working document is still evolving and improving. All interested parties have put forward pertinent suggestions and proposals related to the document. In that regard, following an in-depth study, the delegations of China and the Russian Federation distributed in the Conference on Disarmament last August two non-papers entitled "Existing international legal instruments and the prevention of the weaponization of outer space" and "Verification aspects of PAROS".

All parties are welcome to join the discussions on those issues so that we can put the future substantive work of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space on a better footing. It is the hope of the Chinese delegation that, as stipulated in operative paragraph 5 of General Assembly resolution 58/36, the Conference on Disarmament will assume, as soon as possible, "the primary role in the negotiation of a multilateral agreement or agreements, as appropriate, on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects".

Peace, development and cooperation represent a trend of our times. The early conclusion of an international legal instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space would be conducive to maintaining the peaceful use of outer space, facilitating related international cooperation and promoting common security for all countries. Let us undertake concerted efforts to preserve the vast reaches of outer space as a tranquil place for the benefit of future generations.

Mr. Vasiliev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation considers preventing the deployment of weapons in outer space — and thereby preventing an arms in outer space — to be one of the most important and urgent tasks facing the international community. Russia has traditionally been a sponsor of the draft resolution on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, and we shall do so at this session as well.

The significance of outer space in the life of mankind and in ensuring our further progress is rapidly growing. We are coming to depend increasingly on space technology. Here and now, it is easy to imagine the kinds of dramatic consequences for daily life that would result from violation of the norms governing space activity, let alone from hostilities in outer space.

Objectively speaking, the exploration of outer space is one of the most important means for resolving the global problems of mankind, including those related to energy, information, the wise use of natural resources, protection of the environment and fighting the consequences of natural disasters. On the other hand, if the situation were to develop unfavourably, outer space could become a new arena for military confrontation and a source of new threats to everyone. The appearance of weapons in outer space would give rise to a host of the most serious kinds of complications and dangers, ranging from the undermining of international security and stability to the worsening of the problem of space debris.

Such negative scenarios must and can be avoided. Outer space must remain a sphere for cooperation, not confrontation. Strike weapons have not yet been deployed in outer space, and no decision has been taken to that end. In the light of that reality, we have a real opportunity to prevent the transformation of outer space into a theatre of military confrontation. Preventing the weaponization of outer space would be easier than conducting negotiations on space disarmament.

Of course, we do not choose to create space weapons. We should like once again to emphasize that, as of now and for the near future, the Russian Federation has no plans to create and deploy any kind of space weapon system in outer space. In addition, Russia has consistently complied with the moratorium on antisatellite system tests.

Existing international outer space law — particularly with regard to the prevention of an arms race in outer space — contains obvious gaps. There is clearly a need for its further improvement. A partial filling of those gaps was called for at the Conference on Disarmament in the working paper contained in document CD/1679. It includes a proposal, presented by Russia and China and sponsored also by a group of other States, on the elaboration of a treaty on the prevention of the deployment of weapons in outer space and the threat or use of force against outer space objects. That proposal is being further developed; we welcome the constructive discussions that are taking place in Geneva in that regard. The working paper by Russia and China on possible elements for such a treaty, recently prepared and distributed at the Conference on Disarmament, will undoubtedly serve as a good stimulus for further intensive discussions. We believe that the Conference is the ideal forum for elaborating a new legally binding international instrument to prevent the weaponization of outer space.

The Conference on Disarmament has had many years of experience in working on various aspects of the problem of preventing an arms race in outer space. The Russian-Chinese proposal to which I just referred is our contribution to the future work of the Conference's Ad Hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space, which we hope will be re-established in connection with the adoption of a balanced programme of work for the Conference. Russia and China agree that the Ad Hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space should have a research mandate, not a negotiating mandate. That would be a major contribution of our States to the achievement of a compromise at the Conference on Disarmament, which would allow us to resume its substantive work after a break of many years.

At the same time, we cannot sit idly by until such time as new multilateral international legal treaties have been elaborated to prevent the weaponization of outer space. In that connection, Russia has put forward a whole range of important initiatives.

At the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, the Russian Federation submitted a proposal on the introduction of a moratorium on deploying weapons in outer space, pending the conclusion of the relevant international agreements. In so doing, we also expressed our readiness to undertake that commitment immediately if other space Powers would associate themselves with such a moratorium. In that connection, Russia has taken the initiative and has implemented serious measures of openness and confidence-building in outer space activity such as providing information concerning forthcoming launches of space objects, their purposes and the basic parameters of their orbits.

The Russian Federation has introduced a new, important and far-ranging initiative during the present session of the General Assembly. We have stated, for the first time, that we will not be the first to deploy weapons of any kind in outer space. That is a serious step, and it demonstrates our sense of responsibility. We call upon all States that have space potential to follow our example. Similar unilateral political statements by major actors in the space field that they would not be the first to deploy weapons in outer space could substantively enhance mutual confidence, strengthen motivations to prevent an arms race in outer space and create an essential safety net while research and negotiations are being carried out on a new international legal instrument to prevent the deployment of weapons in outer space. We are convinced that all States, without exception, would stand to gain from that. Moreover, we hope that that initiative, aimed at providing unique, voluntary and intersecting guarantees of security in space, will become the subject of intensive study in capitals, in the United Nations and in other international forums. We would also like to pay due tribute to the interesting and promising proposals and plans concerning prevention of an arms race in outer space put forward by France, Canada and other States at the Conference on Disarmament and other forums. In our view, much of that groundwork continues to be of practical value. We also would like to note the significant contributions made by a number of eminent non-governmental organizations towards identifying themes related to preventing an arms race in outer space.

Growing worldwide awareness of the dangers of deploying of weapons in outer space and a greater understanding of the urgency of taking practical steps to prevent that twenty-first century threat are, once again, making it necessary to adopt a General Assembly resolution on preventing an arms race in outer space. We call on all delegations to support draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.36 on that item.

Mr. Parai (Canada): Canada remains profoundly opposed to the weaponization of space. We want space to be considered as a universal good. Canada's Prime Minister, Paul Martin, expanded upon that concept in his statement to the General Assembly last month, when he said,

> "Space is our final frontier. It has always captured our imagination. What a tragedy it would be if space became one big weapons arsenal and the scene of a new arms race. In 1967, the United Nations agreed that weapons of mass destruction must not be based in space. The time has come to extend that ban to all weapons." (*A/59/PV.5, p. 32*)

We are committed to seeing the Conference on Disarmament re-establish an ad hoc committee to discuss the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects and to seeing the Conference eventually undertake the negotiation of a space weapons ban. With a view to realizing such a ban, the re-establishment of an ad hoc committee on the prevention of an arms race in outer space would also respond to the call of General Assembly resolution 58/36 and its predecessors.

In that regard, Canada supports draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.36 submitted by Egypt and Sri Lanka. We call on all member nations to support this initiative — and not just rhetorically, but in the most practical terms. The Conference must get back to productive work on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, as well as on other matters.

As has been suggested in the Conference on Disarmament, one way to help start this process pending the re-establishment of an ad hoc committee might be for the Conference to establish an experts group to explore some of the more technical aspects of space security issues. Canada would also call for the establishment of crosswalks between the space-related work of the First and Fourth Committees of the General Assembly. Likewise, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and the Conference on Disarmament must work together more closely on this issue.

Exchange of information is essential to address that increasingly critical area of multilateral interest. In March of this year, Canada co-sponsored a workshop on space security with the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, on the margins of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. A clear message from the workshop was that there is a need for a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to ensuring space security.

Canada encourages creative thinking and action with regard to confidence-building measures that could help ensure space security and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We were pleased to hear Russia's recent pledge, made here in the First Committee on 5 October and again today, that it would not be the first to deploy any kind of weapon in outer space, and its appeal to all countries with space-faring potential to follow suit. Such declarations of no first deployment of space-based weapons represent a good interim measure. If adopted widely, they could help build confidence that no nation will station weapons in space, and could lead us closer to our objective of an eventual ban.

Canada's goal is to support the continued access to and use of space by all nations for peaceful purposes. Space and the benefits it provides across a wide range of sectors represent an increasingly valuable resource that must be protected. This international good is simply too precious to leave unprotected by multilateral action.

With the approaching fortieth anniversary of the entry into force of the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, we might also consider how we can work together to encourage States that have not ratified that "Magna Carta of space" to do so before 2007.

On a related matter, I think that it is important to acknowledge the fact that the First Committee now has before it, for the first time, a draft resolution on the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation (A/C.1/59/L.50). The draft resolution is a positive step forward in addressing the clear challenges that missile technology poses to disarmament, non-proliferation and international security. Over time, we hope to see an expansion of multilateral cooperation on that issue.

Ms. Borsiin Bonnier (Sweden): First of all, let me say that Sweden stands firmly behind the statement made on behalf of the European Union by our colleague from the Netherlands. I would like to make some additional remarks from a national perspective.

The implications of the possible weaponization of outer space and the risk of a subsequent arms race are of great concern to my country. While acknowledging the positive role that space technology can play in meeting the global challenges to human development, we must understand that it is also a powerful tool not only for welfare but, potentially, also for warfare.

The legal regime for outer space provides fundamental rules on international responsibility and liability for national space activities, including for civil, military and national security purposes. A set of non-binding principles and declarations has been added to the treaty regime, and a code of conduct against ballistic missile proliferation, the Hague Code of Conduct, has been adopted. We hope that all States will adhere to the Code.

Like the other States members of the European Union, Sweden supports the establishment of a subsidiary body in the Conference on Disarmament to deal with outer space. Sweden has suggested that, as a first step, informal technical meetings take place within the Conference involving a wider range of actors in the space field, such as international organizations, space agencies, space law academia and the private sector. The overall space sector, both civil and military, involves various stakeholders, and it would be fruitful to get their different perspectives. Since space activities are often of a dual-use nature and involve cross-cutting issues between civil and military activities. future work in the Conference on Disarmament would benefit from such an overall perspective.

In line with our reform discussions last week, one additional idea could also be to invite the Office for Outer Space Affairs of the Secretariat to brief the First Committee, either this year or next year, on the work carried out within the framework of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

I would also like to take this opportunity to mention that tomorrow the General Assembly will consider in plenary meeting, the follow up to the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III). A report by the Outer Space Committee (A/59/174) has been transmitted to the General Assembly for that review. The report provides a comprehensive and forward-looking assessment of the implementation process. and clearly demonstrates the importance and usefulness of space applications in addressing global challenges and for improving human living conditions. I believe that the First Committee and the Conference on Disarmament would benefit from the insight it conveys.

Mrs. Fernando (Sri Lanka): The prevention of an arms race in outer space is an issue of importance to my country, and I would refer delegations to our reference to that issue in the statement my delegation made in the general debate. We would also wish to add that on issues such as this one, which are of vital importance to international peace and security, there is indeed merit in reiterating every year in this Committee a draft resolution that draws widespread support, in order that its objectives may ultimately be achieved.

Ms. Cedeño Reyes (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela acknowledges all initiatives considering outer space as the common heritage of mankind, over which no nation has the authority to claim subjective rights or unilateral privileges. We believe [illegible]at outer space must be used for peaceful purposes. This is in line with the humanism that underlies our foreign policy, which is based on strengthening the principle of the sovereign equality of States.

Once again, we support the proposal by China and the Russian Federation at the Conference on Disarmament to put in place an international legal agreement on the prevention of the deployment of weapons in outer space. We are concerned about outer space being used as a theatre of operations for war in the context of an arms race.

Venezuela has been faithful to its commitment to promote the defence of outer space. We have signed three out of the five United Nations treaties on this subject — namely, the Outer Space Treaty, the Agreement on Assistance and the Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects. Our country is also party to other international instruments related to outer space, such as the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water, and the agreements relating to the International Telecommunications Satellite Organization and the International Telecommunication Union.

Lastly, we would like to recall that the Venezuelan Government has set into motion mechanisms for the establishment of an aerospace agency that, we hope, will begin to operate as soon as possible.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the thematic discussion on these two items.

I now give the floor to the representative of Hungary to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.17.

Mr. Nagy (Hungary): On behalf of my Government, I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.17, entitled "Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction".

By the third preambular paragraph, the Assembly would bear in mind its call upon all States parties to the Convention to participate in the implementation of the recommendations of the Review Conferences, including the exchange of information and data agreed to in the Final Declaration of the Third Review Conference and to provide such information and data in conformity with standardized procedure to the Secretary-General on an annual basis and no later than 15 April.

The fourth preambular paragraph welcomes the reaffirmation made in the Final Declaration of the Fourth Review Conference that under all circumstances the use of bacteriological (biological) and toxin weapons and their development, production and stockpiling are effectively prohibited under article I of the Convention.

In its fifth preambular paragraph, the draft resolution recalls the decision reached at the Fifth Review Conference to hold three annual meetings of the States parties of one week duration each year commencing in 2003 until the Sixth Review Conference and to hold a two-week meeting of experts to prepare for each meeting of the States parties.

In its operative paragraph 1, draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.17 notes with satisfaction the increase in the number of States parties to the Convention and reaffirms the call upon all signatory States that have not yet ratified it to do so without delay, and calls upon those States that have not signed the Convention to become parties thereto at an early date, thus contributing to the achievement of universal adherence to the Convention.

In paragraph 2, the draft resolution welcomes the information and data provided to date, and reiterates its call upon all States parties to the Convention to participate in the exchange of information and data agreed to in the Final Declaration of the Third Review Conference of the Parties to the Convention.

Paragraph 3 recalls the decision reached at the Fifth Review Conference to discuss and promote common understanding and effective action on two topics in 2004: enhancing international capabilities for responding to, investigating and mitigating the effects of cases of alleged use of biological or toxin weapons or suspicious outbreaks of disease; and strengthening and broadening national and international institutional efforts and existing mechanisms for the surveillance, detection, diagnosis and combating of infectious diseases affecting humans, animals and plants. It also calls upon the States parties to the Convention to participate in its implementation.

In its operative paragraph 4, A/C.1/59/L.17 requests the Secretary-General to continue to render the necessary assistance to the depositary Governments of the Convention and to provide such services as may be required for the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the Review Conferences, including all necessary assistance to the annual meetings of the States parties and the meetings of experts.

Our expectation is that A/C.1/59/L.17 will generate a wide consensus and will be adopted without a vote, as has been the case in previous years.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Poland.

Mr. Ruginski (Poland): It is an honour and a pleasure to introduce, on behalf of the delegation of Poland, the draft resolution on the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), contained in document A/C.1/59/L.16.

The draft resolution on the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention is very timely. In our work on the draft, we concentrated on the progress achieved in the implementation of the CWC since the adoption of last year's resolution. There have been real achievements, which are reflected in this year's draft.

Special emphasis was placed on reaffirming the importance of the first special session and on the progress made in implementing the two action plans adopted by the States parties to the Convention, namely the Action Plan for universality of the Convention and the Action Plan on the implementation of article VII obligations.

We consider the text of this year's draft resolution to be well balanced. It shows the unequivocal support of the United Nations for the full and effective implementation of all the provisions of the Convention. Our basic assumption and goal was to ensure the draft resolution's approval by consensus, as was the case last year. Consensus is crucial to ensure the unequivocal support of the United Nations for the implementation of the Convention.

The text of the draft resolution and changes from the previous year were set out in the full text of the statement of the delegation of Poland. Copies of the statement have been distributed to all delegations.

During extensive bilateral, open-ended consultations attended by more than 50 delegations, we were assured of support for the draft and of the readiness of First Committee delegations to join the consensus. Let me express my gratitude and thanks to all those delegations that participated in the extensive consultations on the new draft resolution on the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Those consultations confirmed the existence of broad political support in all regions for the implementation of the Convention in its entirety. The consensus draft resolution presented today is a material expression of that support.

As in previous years, Poland remains the sole sponsor of the draft resolution on the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Such sole sponsorship, which was supported in the consultations, ensures regional and political balance and broad support for the draft resolution.

The delegation of Poland asks that the draft resolution on the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention be adopted without a vote.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, who wishes to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Ri Jang Gen (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Let me comment on the remarks made earlier by the Japanese delegation.

Japan has been the victim of a nuclear holocaust, yet it has introduced nuclear weapons onto its territory. When Japan speaks about nuclear disarmament, it sounds hypocritical.

Regarding bilateral relations, it would be beneficial for the State of Japan to implement, in a spirit of sincerity, the Pyongyang Declaration, as announced by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Japan.

My delegation urges Japan to take a fair stand and not simply to side with the United States in the process of the resolution of the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula.

The meeting rose at 1.55 p.m.

United Nations

A/C.1/59/PV.12

General Assembly

Fifty-ninth session

Official Records

First Committee

12th meeting

Wednesday, 20 October 2004, 10 a.m.

New York

Chairman: Mr. De Alba .... (Mexico)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda items 57 to 72 (*continued*)

Thematic discussion on item subjects and introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and international security items

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): This morning we will hear from delegations that have requested the opportunity to introduce draft resolutions on the clusters we have already taken up. Then we will continue, as indicated in document A/C.1/59/CRP.2, to the discussion of the cluster on conventional arms.

Ms. ElMarasy (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is a pleasure for me to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.36, on "Prevention of an arms race in outer space". Egypt and Sri Lanka have for years had the honour of introducing this draft resolution in the First Committee. We wish to issue a warning against the arms race in outer space.

An unprecedented number of countries support this draft resolution this year. I am not going to read out the names of all, because the list is now quite long. However, the draft resolution demonstrates the majority will of all the peoples of the world. In several forums we have emphasized that outer space remains the common heritage of humankind. Therefore, space must not be allowed to become the subject of an arms race. We need to be careful to avoid any kind of arms race at this juncture, be it on Earth or in outer space.

In that context, those who have introduced this draft resolution call upon the members of this Committee to study and adopt it. As members have noted, the text refers, as in previous years, to several international agreements, including those concluded during the General Assembly's first special session on disarmament. The objective was to avoid an arms race in outer space. The draft resolution refers to complementary bilateral and multilateral efforts. We hope there will indeed be further transparency regarding all bilateral efforts here.

Those who are introducing the draft resolution highly appreciate what has been done by the Conference on Disarmament, which has played a very important role in negotiations on multilateral agreements. The draft calls on the Conference to work to achieve those objectives. We hope that during its 2005 session the Conference on Disarmament will be able to establish a special committee to avoid the arms race in outer space. Such a committee must have a clearly defined mandate. We fully appreciate the valuable contributions of China and of the Russian Federation in ensuring that the Conference on Disarmament deals with these issues.

There have been proposals to amend the text of the draft resolution or to strengthen it in accordance with the national priorities of some countries. We respect the preference to adopt a progressive and phased approach to achieve the objective, namely, preventing the arms race in outer space. We favour arriving at a compromise between and among all points

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

of view. That is why we have developed a text that is similar to last year's and have amended it according to recent technical developments so it can receive total support and unanimity.

The draft resolution should, if possible, enjoy this Committee's full support. We hope that all members will be able to support it, thus reflecting the will of the international community with regard to this issue.

Mr. Vasiliev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation, together with the United States of America, is now submitting for consideration by the First Committee a draft resolution on bilateral strategic nuclear arms reductions and the new strategic framework (A/C.1/59/L.56).

On 22 November 2002, the General Assembly for the first time adopted a resolution on this item, resolution 57/68, by consensus. The previous two years had clearly reaffirmed the gradual development of a partnership relation between the Russian Federation and the United States and the establishment of a spirit of cooperation, and on that basis, the Presidents of Russia and the United States issued the joint declaration of 24 May 2002. The most significant indicator of the new level of strategic relations between the two countries is the fact that they no longer consider each other enemies or strategic threats. The declaration also reaffirms that our States are partners and are cooperating to advance stability, security and economic integration, so as to counteract together the global threats and challenges existing today and to promote solutions to regional conflicts.

The current nature of Russian-American relations is an important factor in international security, including consistent progress in the area of nuclear disarmament. The implementation of commitments in this area is playing a key role in the bilateral cooperation of the Russian Federation and the United States. The Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty, signed in Moscow in May 2002, entered into force on 1 June 2003. By that treaty the Russian Federation and the United States committed to reducing and limiting their strategic nuclear warheads, by 31 December 2012, to an aggregate quantity not exceeding 1,700 to 2,200 units for each party. In other words, this reduction is approximately three times greater than that established by the Start I Treaty.

This commitment represents a major step forward for nuclear disarmament and is of great significance for the creation of a security system for the twenty-first century. The Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty ensures that the process of disarmament and verification of arms and conditions continues when the ABM Treaty is no longer in effect and other agreements on verification are also being called into question. The implementation of this treaty will have a substantive impact on strengthening the regime for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and will serve as a real contribution by the Russian Federation and the United States to the implementation of their obligations on nuclear disarmament in accordance with Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

A bilateral commission has been established to implement the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty in accordance with its provisions. Within that framework, an exchange of information is currently taking place regarding compliance by the parties with their obligations and issues considered to be linked to the implementation of the treaty. The first session of the bilateral commission took place in Geneva in April 2004, and the second session was last week.

Issues on strengthening strategic stability in a broader context are also the subject of dialogue within the framework of the working groups established under the aegis of the Russian-American advisory group on issues of strategic security. In addition, by the end of 2009, the Start I Treaty will still be in force, with its broad and intensive verification mechanism. Moreover, if the two parties agree, the treaty can be extended. That means that the strategic offensive potentials of Russia and the United States will not only be the subject of regular consideration in the bilateral working bodies created for that purpose, but will also, for a long time to come, be subject to the dual and mutually complementary restrictions of those treaties.

We must note here that the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty makes it possible to reduce strategic nuclear forces to a level of minimal sufficiency without threatening Russia's national security. The President of the Russian Federation, Mr. Putin, has declared on several occasions the Russian Federation's readiness to irreversibly reduce the Russian nuclear potential to levels even lower than those provided for by the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty.

The Russian Federation, in accordance with the obligations it has undertaken, has continued to take consistent steps for further reduction of its strategic offensive weapons in order to eliminate excess fissile material resulting from the dismantling of weapons that are no longer necessary for national security. We inform the international community, on a regular basis and in detail, of the specific results of this scrupulously conducted, technically complex and very costly work. In particular, the Russian Federation has submitted detailed information on this issue to the recent third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 NPT Review Conference. A summary of the data on the volume of reductions of strategic offensive weapons is included in the draft resolution we are submitting.

Since 1991, serious efforts in the sphere of nuclear disarmament have also been carried out on the basis of unilateral presidential initiatives by the two States. For practical purposes, the Russian Federation has implemented unilateral initiatives to reduce non-strategic nuclear weapons, which we have already spoken about in the First Committee earlier this session. The process of destroying nuclear warheads is being carried out in accordance with the technological capacities and the real levels of financing available. Russia is also continuing to consistently implement its treaty obligations to reduce not only nuclear but also conventional weapons and to eliminate chemical weapons stockpiles.

Recent events have reaffirmed the urgency, relevance and great international significance — expressed in the joint declaration — of the joint Russian and United States undertaking to build up bilateral efforts to counteract global threats and challenges to international security in the twenty-first century. Those efforts include fighting the linked threats of international terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their delivery systems. The practical steps undertaken by Russia and the United States to reduce strategic nuclear weapons will unquestionably serve those objectives.

Naturally, achieving those objectives without broad international support is impossible. Therefore, Russia and the United States reaffirm the importance of compliance with and strengthening of such fundamental multilateral agreements as the NPT and the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions. In that context, we would like to recall the elaboration and adoption by the Security Council, with the active participation of Russia and the United States, of resolution 1540 (2004), which laid a solid foundation for countering the black market in WMD. We would like to underscore once again that the task of counteracting the spread of WMD and the war on terrorism must be prosecuted in strict compliance with the norms of international law, taking into account the legitimate security interests and social and economic development of all States.

We would like to express our gratitude to all States participating in the work of the First Committee that have spoken positively on the bilateral efforts of the United States and Russia to reduce strategic nuclear arsenals and also to establish and develop new strategic relations between our two States. We call on all delegations to support the draft resolution introduced jointly by Russia and the United States, entitled "Bilateral strategic nuclear arms reductions and the new strategic framework". We hope that, as was the case at the Assembly's fifty-seventh session, the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Cynkin (United States of America): This year the United States and the Russian Federation are introducing together a draft resolution on "Bilateral strategic nuclear arms reductions and the new strategic framework". I, too, would like to make a few points about our draft resolution.

The draft resolution follows up on a consensus resolution that our two countries tabled at the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. Several elements of this year's text developed themes laid down in its predecessor, but we have tried to avoid a rote repetition of points that have been made before.

The nuclear-weapon States bear a particular responsibility under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to pursue effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race and to nuclear disarmament. In the draft resolutions on our bilateral nuclear reduction activities, our two countries try to make clear to the world community that progress is being made in this important area.

The present draft resolution welcomes the entry into force of the Moscow Treaty and describes the results of continuing efforts by the United States and Russia to reduce strategic nuclear warheads through its implementation. Some of the material in the draft resolution regarding eliminations carried out by the United States has not been previously publicized. In addition, the draft resolution recognizes that the United States and the Russian Federation have developed a new strategic relationship and that we continue to pursue cooperative efforts in strategic offensive reductions through meetings of the Moscow Treaty's Bilateral Implementation Commission, as well as in working groups established under the Consultative Group for Strategic Security.

Because forced reductions are not the only element in our ongoing efforts to carry out our NPT article VI obligations, the draft resolution points out steps being taken to implement bilateral agreements on downblending highly enriched uranium for use as power reactor fuel. It also points to continued efforts under our agreement on the disposition of plutonium designated as no longer required for defence purposes.

The United States believes that the draft resolution presents a picture of steady progress in this highly important area, based on the firm commitment by both countries to continue their cooperation. We hope that our draft resolution will once again be adopted by consensus.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): We will now begin the conventional arms segment of our discussion. However, before I call on the first speaker on that theme, I would like to recall that I have proposed that we make available enough time and space for Ambassador Thalmann to conduct informal consultations. I therefore intend to adjourn the formal part of this meeting around 11 a.m. Introduction of resolutions in the conventional weapons cluster and the informal dialogue will come tomorrow.

Mr. Elisaia (Samoa): As current Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum group, I am making this statement on behalf of Australia, Fiji, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and my own country, Samoa.

The problem of the illicit availability and use of small arms is very real for the communities and countries of the Pacific islands region. Although the number of small arms in circulation in Pacific island countries is small, in comparison to some other regions, the potential for their misuse to cause humanitarian, social and economic harm and even to destabilize Governments is great. In our region the illicit possession and unlawful use of such weapons has exacerbated law and order problems and internal conflicts, undermining good governance and development.

For those reasons, the members of the Pacific Islands Forum have worked assiduously to develop and implement a common regional approach to reduce the trade in small arms. The most recent example of that coordinated approach and of our common commitment to addressing small arms concerns was a regional workshop sponsored by the Governments of Japan and Australia and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, which was held in Fiji in August 2004. Pacific Islands Forum members wish to thank the Japanese Government and the Regional Centre for their generous support for that initiative.

In consolidating the outcomes of previous regional workshops, the 2004 workshop was an invaluable forum for sharing experiences on the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms. It also served to advance the consideration of a model Weapons Control Bill that has been endorsed by Pacific Islands Forum leaders as a basis for enacting and improving relevant legislation in national jurisdictions. Identifying and fixing legislative gaps through information-sharing and common efforts is a key strategy in our approach to better controlling small arms.

Participants in the Fiji workshop agreed on a number of practical initiatives. First is to identify national assistance needs, including any legislative and technical assistance requirements. To this end, the Pacific Islands Forum secretariat will develop a matrix of technical assistance and capacity-building requirements to help match specific needs to possible resources.

A second initiative is to use national reporting under the United Nations Programme of Action as a tool for developing a more reliable knowledge base on quantities, sources and uses of small arms and on gaps in the implementation of controls. In particular, such reporting provides a mechanism for information-sharing and feedback, helping us to customize the model Weapons Control Bill to suit respective institutional and legislative requirements.

A third initiative is to take advantage of assistance provided by United Nations Development Programme to fulfil United Nations reporting requirements. Fourthly, we will explore ways to further improve small arms security in the Pacific, including the development of follow-up training and stockpile management programmes to build on recent progress made in improving the physical security of defence force armories in the region.

Pacific Islands Forum members intend to report outcomes of these efforts to the Forum's next annual leaders' summit, in 2005, to the 2005 United Nations small arms Biennial Meeting and to the 2006 United Nations small arms Review Conference. The latter two meetings will be important to consolidate the international community's ongoing efforts to build an institutional framework capable of addressing the small arms threat in a holistic manner.

Through practical initiatives like the recent Fiji workshop, Pacific island countries will continue to adopt a coordinated regional approach toward addressing the small arms threat. In this context, the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) was mandated under the Forum leaders' 2000 "Biketawa Declaration", which states that assistance will be provided to a member upon request "on the basis of all Forum members being part of the Pacific islands extended family". The Mission has had good results in its first year, not least because of the extensive participation of a large number of Pacific Islands Forum countries. Since it began in July 2003, RAMSI has overseen the passage of relevant legislation and the surrender or confiscation of 3,700 illegal firearms, thus helping to restore stability and law and order, consolidating Government finances and laying the groundwork for long-term governance reform. RAMSI stands as a cooperative example of a region's practical response to small arms and related threats.

Similarly, there has been continued rapid progress in weapons disposal efforts in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea. As noted in the Secretary-General's recent report to the Security Council of 29 September 2004 (S/2004/771), 1,841 weapons, or approximately 92.6 per cent of the total collected, have now been destroyed. This steady progress in weapons disposal, in addition to the recruitment and training of additional police, has contributed to improved law and order and stability throughout the province.

Despite the achievements and progress that Pacific Islands Forum countries have made, we are not immune — and in many ways are highly vulnerable — to the destabilizing presence and proliferation of small arms and to targeting by unscrupulous arms traders and other opportunists. We are determined to continue to address those threats and challenges through concerted regional action.

Mr. Lezona (Congo) (*spoke in French*): My delegation is particularly gratified to participate in this thematic debate of our Committee, which during this session has introduced an innovation by subdividing its work into three parts: statements by delegations, statements of experts — the informal part — and the introduction of draft resolutions. Although this arrangement is still in its first, experimental stage, my delegation would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on the initiative you have launched and which we keenly hope will open up the way to frank, exciting and open dialogue. We also hope it will rightly lead us towards the improvement we wish to see in the effectiveness of our Committee's methods of work and, therefore, to the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

The illicit trade in small arms in all its aspects, and assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them are the items on which I wish to take the floor. Those two items are linked, especially in the context of the Central African subregion, where most countries have been particularly swept into the spiral of deadly armed conflicts.

The multiple evils spawned by the situation, which we continue to see — such as the circulation and illegal trade in small arms and light weapons, the unregulated movements of armed groups, mass displacement of refugees, growing crime and insecurity, restriction on the free circulation of people in certain areas because of anti-personnel mines and unexploded ordnance — are real obstacles to peace, stability and the development of the subregion and, through a boomerang effect, that of the African continent.

Today, it is estimated that there are some 42,000 light weapons in circulation in my country, and more than 40,000 ex-combatants need assistance in being reintegrated. Given the seriousness of the situation, the Government of the Congo is determined to meet the challenge and has spared no efforts in negotiating with the European Union, United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank for the financing necessary to implement the national programme for the demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants.

So, too, the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects is one of our major concerns. The Congolese Government intends to rely on technical and financial support that can be provided by the international community to strengthen cooperation among its bodies, international organizations and organizations and associations of civil society in order to combat trafficking in light weapons and to effectively apply the Programme of Action. That is why, as in previous years, my country has joined others as a sponsor of draft resolutions A/C.1/59/L.43 and A/C.1/59/L.21, entitled, respectively, "The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects" and "Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them".

Mr. Rowe (Sierra Leone): My delegation did not participate in the general debate or in yesterday's thematic discussion on nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. However, we share the concern of others that these weapons pose the greatest threat to mankind and, more importantly, that something must be done not only to stop their proliferation and to prohibit their use, but also to eliminate them from the face of the earth.

Today, the focus of the thematic discussion is not just on the threat but also on the reality of the spread and use of so-called conventional weapons. I say so-called because, as we know from our bitter experience in Sierra Leone, these weapons cause massive destruction, especially in internal conflicts. Therefore, we have every reason to suggest that perhaps next year, in our thematic debate, all of what we now place under the rubric of "conventional weapons" should be considered under the cluster of "other weapons of mass destruction".

I would like to touch briefly on three categories of these other weapons, or conventional weapons: first, anti-personnel mines; secondly, certain weapons which may be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects; and thirdly, small arms and light weapons. I will consider each of them from the perspective of universality and compliance. The Ambassador of the United Kingdom yesterday spoke, I think, about the realities of contemporary challenges. If I understand him correctly, I believe he was saying that, since we are face common concerns and challenges, we should take a serious look at the implementation of our commitments.

My delegation shares that view, but would like to add that there is a direct relationship between compliance with, and the universality of, arms control and disarmament instruments. In other words, while we emphasize the obligation to comply, we must also urge others who are outside these regimes and which have not done so to make a commitment by becoming parties to the respective instruments. Universality and compliance must go hand in hand.

Last year, my delegation told the Committee that Sierra Leone, consistent with the principle of universality, was a party to the Ottawa mine-ban Convention. We also expressed our commitment to the full and effective implementation and compliance with the provisions of the treaty. As promised, and notwithstanding our limited capacity, Sierra Leone forwarded its initial article 7 compliance report to the Secretary-General earlier this year.

We also reported that we had recently destroyed our entire stockpile of anti-personnel landmines — all 959 pieces. Not much, comparatively speaking. But considering the humanitarian consequences of the deliberate use of, or accidental contact with, say, 20 of those pieces, we can say that, in destroying its stockpile, Sierra Leone has made a significant contribution to the objective of a mine-free world.

Sierra Leone has promoted the universalization and implementation of the Convention, and appropriate enabling legislation, in compliance with the Convention, is under consideration. Of course, we look forward to the First Review Conference in Nairobi, which we consider an important step towards achieving the objective of a mine-free world.

Turning now to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), we assured the Committee last year that we remain committed to our policy of contributing, as far as possible, to the universality of all multilateral disarmament and arms control regimes, including those that are closely linked with international humanitarian law. We mentioned our concern about the dangers posed by the existence and presence of unexploded ordnance and explosive remnants of war in populated areas in post-conflict Sierra Leone. In fact, a few weeks ago, our military successfully detonated unexploded bombs about 50 kilometres from the capital, Freetown.

In order to strengthen the CCW, last month Sierra Leone deposited its instrument of ratification and acceptance of the relevant provisions of the Convention pertaining to the four Protocols and their relevant amendments.

The third aspect of conventional weapons I would like to address is the illicit trade and transfer of small arms and light weapons. Granted that the Programme of Action adopted by the 2001 United Nations Conference is not legally binding, and granted that the submission of implementation reports to the biennial meetings is voluntary, in the view of my delegation, it is politically and morally binding on all States Members of the Organization. We say morally because of the humanitarian dimension of the problem. In reminding us of the linkage between the scourge of the illegal transfer of small arms and light weapons and the norms of international humanitarian law, the representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) last week rightly pointed out that the obligation of States under international humanitarian law should be converted into intensified implementation of all aspects of the 2001 Programme of Action. My delegation shares that view.

I think that the exclamation mark in the ICRC statement, in our view, was the assertion that

> "all of these weapons originate in States parties to the Geneva Convention and fall into the hands of those who violate those norms through inadequate controls on their transfer." (*see A/C.1/59/PV.6*)

By participating actively in its drafting and adoption, Sierra Leone is, in a sense, a party to the Programme of Action. Its limited capacity for implementation notwithstanding, Sierra Leone is making every effort to implement the relevant provisions of the document. We are already trying to review and strengthen our national implementation mechanism for the preparation of our report to the 2005 Biennial Conference.

As one of the first countries to endorse the three-year extension of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa, Sierra Leone is endorsing a further extension of this important regional initiative. We also support efforts to transform the Moratorium into a legally binding instrument.

As a victim of the devastating and destructive consequences of the illicit transfer and use of small arms and light weapons, Sierra Leone is of the view that the principle of the rule of law must be injected into all aspects of this phenomenon, from manufacture to brokering, and from transfer and re-transfer to tracing and use. That is why we support the drafting and adoption of relevant international and legally binding instruments for as many aspects of the problem as possible. It is no surprise that we would like to see an international legally binding and transparent instrument on the tracing and marking of these deadly so-called small weapons — weapons that have caused such massive destruction of life and property in countries such as Sierra Leone.

The illicit transfer and indiscriminate use of conventional weapons, especially those that are euphemistically referred to as "small and light" are not merely threats to international peace and security. They are, in reality, and on a daily basis, eroding human security. For evidence of this reality, we have only to review current and imminent United Nations peacekeeping operations, in Africa, for example.

Mr. Youssouf (Mali) (*spoke in French*): Since I am taking the floor for the first time, I would like first of all, on behalf of my delegation, to congratulate you, Sir — and, through you, the other members of the Bureau — on your well-deserved election to preside over the work of the Committee. Your personal experience and the skill you have shown in guiding our debates since the outset of our work are clear guarantees of the success of our deliberations. I would like to assure you of the support and cooperation of my delegation in the discharge of your mandate.

The objective of our Committee's work is to meet major challenges in the field of arms control and disarmament. The importance that the international community attaches to that question was noted by many delegations during the general debate.

My delegation understands and shares the concerns voiced regarding nuclear disarmament, weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons, and the risk of their acquisition by terrorists. Here I would like to assure the Committee of the readiness of the Republic of Mali to contribute to collective disarmament efforts. However, such actions must take place in the context of a multilateral framework.

The major concern of my country, my subregion and Africa regarding disarmament is the problem of small arms and light weapons. For our continent, weapons of that type represent a genuine challenge to peace, the stability of our States and to security and the development of our peoples.

Since the end of the Cold War and of strategic competition, possession of weapons is no longer the monopoly of States, because of the spread of conflicts in certain regions of the world, including Africa. Ethnic and religious groups, economic interests and militias now are clashing within sovereign entities.

During the 1990s, in certain parts of Africa, States lost exclusive control over arms. That situation opened the way to large-scale banditry, with armed attacks, carjackings, killings and injuries, and rape during armed conflict. Statistics reveal that from 150 million to 500 million small arms and light weapons are in circulation today in the world, beyond all control by States.

It is the magnitude of the situation that in 1993 prompted the President of the Republic of Mali to request the support of the Secretary-General in combating this phenomenon in Mali and in the West African subregion. The positive results we have seen in our country since then demonstrate the importance of the large-scale efforts to achieve that objective. Those substantive results are the fruit of the political will of States to engage in a ruthless struggle against the spread of small arms. The moratorium on the importing, exporting and manufacture of small arms and light weapons in West Africa is an outstanding illustration of that. Here I would like to pay tribute to the commitment of the member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). I also wish to welcome the significant progress now being made in work on an international instrument on marking and tracing light weapons.

My country, which has always been in the avant-garde of that struggle in West Africa, today has a wealth of experience. The Republic of Mali endured an armed rebellion during the 1990s in the southern region, and in 1996 it established a national commission to combat the spread of light weapons. Between 2001 and 2003 that body collected and burned, during ceremonies called the Flame of Peace held throughout the country, approximately 850 weapons. From this rostrum, I would like to thank the Belgian Government for its considerable support for the work of that commission.

In conclusion, I would like to draw the attention of all delegations to draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.21, entitled, "Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them", which my country has submitted for adoption by our Committee on behalf of the 15 member States of ECOWAS. I would like, in advance, to thank all of the delegations who will be kind enough to support the resolution. We hope that, as in the past, it will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Sanders (Netherlands): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Croatia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro, and the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

The uncontrolled proliferation of small arms and light weapons remains a world-wide scourge. Small arms cause some 10,000 casualties per week. It is an issue all of our countries are confronted with. The easy access to those weapons exacerbates conflicts, facilitates violent crime and terrorism, impedes post-conflict reconstruction and undermines long-term sustainable development.

Factors affecting demand are especially relevant to addressing the illicit trade in and acquisition of small arms and light weapons. Small arms control must be aided by a reduction in small arms demand, and such reduction is closely linked to good governance and confidence in public institutions.

The member States of the European Union would like to stress the importance of early and full implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. That is why the EU is looking forward to a substantial and forward-looking Biennial Meeting of States Parties, to be held in 2005, which will be the last biennial meeting before the next United Nations

Conference on Small Arms and Light Weapons, in 2006.

The EU is very active in the fields covered by the Programme of Action. Apart from substantial national programmes of member countries, the EU provides approximately €52 million to small arms and light weapons programmes in Cambodia, South-Eastern Europe and Latin America, as well as to small arms destruction and disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation operations in Tanzania, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

The EU welcomes and strongly supports the work of the Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, and of its Chairman, Ambassador Thalmann. The EU is looking forward to the informal consultations on this matter and will contribute actively to their success. The EU is of the opinion that the Working Group should work towards a legally binding instrument. The EU would favour the inclusion of ammunition for small arms and light weapons and of related explosives within the mandate of the Open-ended Working Group and in the aforementioned international instrument. It is important that the right to initiate tracing requests not be unnecessarily limited.

The EU is also of the opinion that there is no need to create a new international body for cooperation in tracing. Existing networks should be used. However, it is important to establish national focal points to facilitate a fast and efficient flow of information and tracing requests. The EU reiterates its support for the successful conclusion of those negotiations, aimed at the adoption of a legally binding international instrument to enable States to trace small arms and light weapons in a timely and reliable manner.

To a considerable extent, the small arms issue is a problem of transfers. The EU supports the current broad-based regional processes aimed at building support for the development of transfer controls and for promoting the inclusion in the United Nations Programme of Action of minimum common international controls on small arms and light weapons transfers. Progress on those issues would be a significant step in reducing the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons.

The EU also welcomes the broad-based consultations held by the Secretary-General on further steps to enhance international cooperation in preventing, combating and eradicating illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons and the report of the Secretary-General on the outcome of those consultations (*A/59/181*).

In 2003 the Council of the European Union adopted a common position, requiring that each member State introduce national legislation in order to effectively control brokering activities. The EU is convinced that the establishment of national legislation and regionally accepted rules and practices on brokering activities is essential and urgent. At the same time the EU stresses that in addition, a global, multilateral approach to the problem of illicit brokering is necessary. That is supported by the outcome of the broad-based consultations organized by the Department for Disarmament Affairs. An open-ended working group on illicit brokering would not interfere with the progress of the Open-ended Working Group on Identifying and Tracing.

Evaluation and verification of end-user certificates is part of the complex licensing process. Verification of the recipient is of crucial importance. Therefore, the EU encourages Member States to support consultations on effective end-user certificate systems at regional and subregional levels, conscious that evaluation and verification of both end-user and end-use are important in minimizing the risks of diversion of the exported goods and that any investigation, prior to approval, should involve all the available information.

In the context of arms transparency, the EU welcomes the decision to lower the reporting threshold of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms for large-calibre artillery systems. That will enhance the Register's relevance to a number of subregions around the world, particularly in Africa. Interested Member States, if they wish to do so, can now also include transfers of small arms and light weapons in their annual report to the Register, using definitions and reporting methods they deem appropriate, and as part of additional background information.

Worldwide, there are an estimated 100,000 man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS) in circulation today, of which thousands are thought to be on offer on the black market and many of which are presumed to be in the possession of terrorists and other non-State actors. MANPADS are extremely lethal, easily concealable and inexpensive. Not only are they being used by insurgents for guerrilla purposes, in recent years MANPADS have increasingly become a terrorist tool for threatening civil aviation. That development warrants worldwide attention and immediate action.

In this connection, the EU also welcomes the decision to include MANPADS within the scope of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. As the Secretary-General noted, "This would contribute to broad-based international efforts to stem illicit transfers, particularly in preventing these short-range ground-to-air systems from falling into the hands of terrorists." *(A/58/274, p. 5)*

Those broader efforts, in various multilateral forums, focus in particular on export controls. They were initially prescribed by the Wassenaar Arrangement, but the political commitment by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to extend export controls to the entire OSCE area and the Group of Eight (G-8) initiative to internationalize those controls as the gold standard for controls on MANPADS are all supported firmly by the European Union.

The First Review Conference of the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention will take place later this year in Nairobi. The Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World — as this important event has become known — provides us with an opportunity to assess the enormous progress that has been achieved so far: 143 States have adhered to the Convention; the number of States officially trading in anti-personnel landmines has fallen from 34 to zero; and the number of States where such mines are used has dropped from 19 in 1997 to no more than five today. More than 37 million stockpiled mines have been destroyed, and large areas of mined land have been cleared. Most importantly, the number of new victims of landmines — killed or injured — has dropped significantly.

But at the same time, the Nairobi Summit provides us with an opportunity to chart a course for the solution of the landmine problem in the coming years. Important challenges remain. Promoting and achieving universal adherence to the Mine Ban Convention remains a priority, as vast stocks of anti-personnel mines are still kept by States outside of the Convention. The EU has carried out numerous démarches to promote the widest adherence to the principles of the Convention and urges States not party to accede to the Convention. Landmines still kill or injure thousands of innocent people each year and remain a formidable obstacle to development. It will be a significant challenge in the next five years to ensure the financial resources necessary to fulfil the mine clearance obligations within the timelines of the Convention.

In order to reduce the number of mine accident victims, to help victims and to foster socio-economic development, the European Union is providing assistance to affected States and communities. The combined effort of the EU and its member States make the Union the biggest contributor to mine action worldwide. Mine action is characterized by close cooperation between Governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and local communities. The EU urges all States in a position to do so to continue or to join this cooperation.

The EU will participate actively and at the highest possible level in the Nairobi Summit and encourages all States to do the same in order to send a clear signal that the landmine problem is finite and can indeed be solved.

Last year the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) saw the adoption of a fifth protocol, on explosive remnants of war. It was a success of process and of substance: of process, since it was the first time in a number of years that we concluded a legally binding instrument in the field of arms control; and of substance, since it is our belief that this protocol will significantly reduce the humanitarian risk to civilian populations.

The EU attaches great importance to the entry into force of the Protocol, which several EU member States have already ratified. The Union calls upon all CCW States to make efforts for early ratification, and it the stands ready to further contribute constructively to considerations and developments on the application of existing principles of international humanitarian law in the context of explosive remnants of war and on possible preventive measures.

The EU also considers it crucial that the serious humanitarian, developmental and economic concerns posed by the irresponsible use of mines other than anti-personnel mines — MOTAPMs — be addressed. Reliable reports from humanitarian organizations and non-governmental organizations working in conflict zones, as well as from States, highlight those concerns. We have seen a growing awareness of the urgency to address those humanitarian problems. At the same time, we acknowledge that MOTAPMs can still be used as legitimate weapons that serve important military purposes with regard to self-defence and other military operations.

It is important to strike a balance between humanitarian concerns and military considerations. The EU would like to draw attention to the proposal on MOTAPMs sponsored by more than 30 States parties to the CCW, including a number of EU partners. EU countries have also made important contributions to the process on subjects such as sensitive fuses, detectability and the problems of mines that are laid outside fenced and marked areas. The EU very much welcomes the efforts undertaken by the coordinator with a view to facilitate the discussion and allow progress on that issue.

The EU is actively promoting the establishment of a compliance mechanism applicable to the entire CCW. Simplicity, clarity and cost-effectiveness should be guiding principles of any such consultation and compliance mechanism. It should not unduly burden States parties, and it should be consistent with existing meeting and reporting procedures. The EU is actively reflecting on modalities for an effective mechanism. We encourage other States parties to reflect likewise and to take a flexible position as well.

The Chairman *(spoke in Spanish)*: Mindful of the fact that our speakers list includes, thus far, seven more delegations, let me suggest that those delegations might speak at our next meeting.

I now intend to adjourn the formal part of this meeting so that Ambassador Anton Thalmann, the Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, can hold informal discussions.

The meeting rose at 11.07 a.m.

United Nations
A/C.1/59/PV.13

General Assembly
Fifty-ninth session

Official Records

First Committee
13th meeting
Thursday, 21 October 2004, 10 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. De Alba .... (Mexico)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda items 57 to 72 (*continued*)

Thematic discussion on item subjects and introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and international security items

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): As agreed yesterday, we will continue today with formal statements by delegations. If there is enough time, we will move on to other items. There are 20 speakers on the list, however, so it is unlikely that we will have time to take up other issues.

It seems that we will not be able to have the Director of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs with us for a dialogue today, as the delegation of Sweden had suggested, because he is available only during the morning. It appears that we will have to cancel that proposed dialogue, although we thank Mr. Sergio Camacho-Lara for his willingness to participate. I believe that his participation next year would be very beneficial to our work. We know that he is ready and willing to participate. I think at some point later on, when we look at the programme of work of the sixtieth session, we will be able to come back to this issue.

Mr. Rabbâni (Afghanistan): As I am taking the floor for the first time during this session, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. We are confident that the abilities and long-standing experience you and the other members of the Bureau are bringing to our discussion will guide the work of this body to a positive outcome.

Certainly, all of the items on the agenda of the First Committee are extremely important for global peace and security. Among them, the two items that are fundamental to the peace, security and stability of my country are the issues of small arms and light weapons and of anti-personnel mines. Regrettably, today, post-conflict Afghanistan suffers from both of these scourges. I will briefly discuss these two issues, which are fundamental to the consolidation of peace and security in Afghanistan.

Millions of small arms and light weapons in circulation pose the greatest threat to the stability and economic and social development of Afghanistan. An earlier estimate by United Nations experts put the number of small arms in the country at around 10 million. Fortunately, recent analysis places the actual number at less than 1.5 million weapons. However, despite being less than previously thought, the presence of small arms and light weapons in the hands of non-State actors is a formidable challenge for the Government, and their collection remains the highest priority. There is a unanimous agreement among the Government of Afghanistan, the United Nations and the international community that the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants must take place in order for peace to take hold. They are all aware of the fact that DDR is vital

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for the promotion of reconstruction, maintenance of peace and the prevention of relapse into conflict.

For the disarmament efforts to succeed in post-conflict societies such as Afghanistan, they should be carried out with patience and in conjunction with reconciliation efforts in order to build trust and confidence. In addition to these efforts, the consistent and continued support and assistance of the international community is crucial for the success of DDR in Afghanistan. The reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian life and finding alternative livelihoods for them can only be possible with the support of the international community. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Government of Japan, the lead nation in the DDR process currently under way, for its valuable and generous support.

Afghanistan supports the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We believe that it is an important step towards curbing the excessive accumulation and the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons. We therefore call upon Member States and the international community to take appropriate measures to curb the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons.

The second challenge that post-conflict Afghanistan confronts today is the presence of large amounts of landmines and unexploded ordnance that kill or maim 10 to 12 people each day. Although all sides involved in the armed conflict planted landmines during the war, the majority of the landmines were planted indiscriminately over most of the country by former Soviet forces and the pro-Soviet Afghan Government during the years of Soviet occupation of the country. According to the United Nations estimate, there are five to 10 million landmines in Afghanistan and approximately 11 per cent of the total land area is contaminated with mines, making Afghanistan one of the most heavily mined countries in the world. Roads, agricultural areas, irrigation canals, villages and even areas close to the capital city of Kabul are infested with landmines. The presence of landmines in these areas obstructs economic development, reconstruction and the repatriation of refugees. Their elimination is, therefore, crucial for the emergence of an economically sound and politically stable Afghanistan.

We are of the view that mine action should be considered an important component of any humanitarian and development assistance to the mine-affected countries. As a result of increased international attention, mine-clearance operations have gained momentum in the last few years. Large parts of the country have been cleared. However, many other parts still remain infested with mines. As a country that has experienced terrible human suffering and continues to experience the devastation caused by landmines, Afghanistan supports the draft resolution on implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Afghanistan supports all international efforts aimed at achieving a mine-free world and acceded to the Ottawa Convention on Landmines in March 2003. We are thankful to the international community for their active support in the mine-clearance campaign in Afghanistan. We are convinced that this support will continue.

Finally, we gratefully acknowledge the financial support and technical cooperation provided by the Governments of the United States, Japan and the European Union for the mine clearing operations in Afghanistan.

Mr. Bar (Israel): I would like to make a general statement outlining Israel's position with regards to conventional arms.

In view of the growing threat arising from the misuse and indiscriminate use of conventional arms, these weapons deserve particular attention on the part of the international community. The history of warfare is one in which tremendous civilian casualties have resulted solely from the use of conventional weapons. Conventional weapons in the hands of terrorists or countries that support terrorists can have a strategic impact, adding to the humanitarian devastation that they cause. The lessons of history, combined with a concern for the future, offer several important perspectives with respect to conventional arms and armaments.

First, armaments in and of themselves do not pose threats, as aptly phrased many years ago in the saying, "A sword never kills anybody; it is a tool in the killer's hand." It is the poisonous combination of extensive armaments and hostile intentions that constitute the genuine threat.

Secondly, States must bear in mind that the need for armaments is in many cases a legitimate response to a given situation in which States are compelled to defend and secure their territory and populations. Building trust and confidence in a region will reduce the need for armaments. When nations live together in a spirit of peace and good neighbourliness, it will be possible to reduce armaments and increase transparency.

At the same time, it is important that arms be controlled and restraint be exercised by each and every State, in order to prevent unnecessary human suffering and loss of innocent life. The consequence of the uncontrolled spread of conventional weapons, or worse, their acquisition by terrorist or criminal elements, is invariably the loss of innocent life. It is for this reason that my Government views the irresponsible use and transfer of conventional arms as a serious threat to regional and global security and stability. We believe that the best way to curb illicit arms proliferation throughout the world is through strong national commitment and determination. States bear the primary responsibility for ensuring that no weapons are transferred from their territory without proper oversight.

The scourge of illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons has brought about new threats to civilians in the form of man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS). As we stated during the general debate, we believe that these weapons deserve particular attention by the international community.

Israel believes that confidence-building measures are an effective and significant instrument for improving relations and promoting good-neighbourliness in the regional and subregional contexts. Such measures must be mutually agreed upon and have the objective of enhancing States' sense of security, thereby reducing tensions. In considering such steps, however, we must bear in mind the specific nature of conflicts, circumstances and threats in various regions. Some measures that are applicable and can contribute to stability in certain regions could have the opposite effect in other regions and could, in fact, result in reckless arms races.

In that context, it should be noted that confidence-building measures are a means to achieve peace and security. They should not be considered a reward, as they are an essential element in the process leading to trust, confidence and peace. Israel is of the view that ideas on how to promote and identify regional confidence-building measures should be, first and foremost, developed and agreed upon in the relevant regional and subregional contexts. Such measures should be presented and negotiated, freely and directly, between the regional parties with a view to reducing tensions and facilitating political dialogue and cooperation. We believe that that sequence should be preserved if confidence-building measures are to attain their objectives.

Moreover, confidence-building measures cannot be imposed by some States or even by the international community. Imposing such measures would not be conducive to the building of trust and confidence at the regional and subregional levels. In that regard, we welcome the idea of creating a database on confidence-building measures already in place in various regions.

Transparency in armaments can serve as a useful instrument for reducing tensions. We believe that, in principle, the success of transparency is contingent upon the normalization of political and military relations among the States of a region. At the same time, Israel is convinced that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is an important instrument and that its contribution to regional and global stability and security is undoubted. Since the inception of that instrument, Israel has responded annually to the Register with regard to its seven categories of major battle weapons. We have done so despite the fact that our region has suffered continuing threats and a lack of basic trust between nations. Israel has decided to act in that way with the purpose of building confidence.

Unfortunately, there have been no significant developments in the Middle East region with regard to broader participation by States in the United Nations Register or the beginning of a dialogue on regional transparency mechanisms. We hope that other countries will join us in participating in that instrument with a view to its universalization.

Israel attaches particular importance to action aimed at preventing and minimizing human suffering resulting from the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines. Israel believes that an integral component of the effort to address that threat is cooperation. Cooperative initiatives in the areas of mine clearance, mine awareness and victim rehabilitation are important and contribute greatly to efforts aimed at alleviating the humanitarian problems associated with mines.

Israel has taken a number of unilateral steps as well, including ceasing all production of anti-personnel landmines, declaring a moratorium on the export of all types of anti-personnel mines and ratifying the Amended Protocol II annexed to the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW). Israel hopes that other nations in the region will join us in establishing cooperative mechanisms aimed at reducing the threat posed by such weapons, preferably within the context of a comprehensive regional peace.

As a high contracting party to the CCW, we see the Convention as a good example of how States can act to restrain the use of arms without compromising their vital national security interests. Israel has actively participated in the negotiations on Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War, with a view to reducing the humanitarian effects of the explosive remnants of war in post-conflict situations. We welcome the adoption of the Protocol by the States parties to the CCW, and we look forward to the continuation of the process within the framework of the Convention.

Although Israel shares the humanitarian objectives of the Ottawa Treaty, we cannot commit ourselves, owing to regional circumstances and the continued threat of terrorism, to a total ban on the use of anti-personnel landmines. We have, however, taken part in several international initiatives aimed at promoting mine awareness and support for the victims of those terrible weapons.

Finally, we cannot conclude our reference to the issue of conventional arms without mentioning the problem of terrorism. Terrorism makes no distinction with regard to its victims. All of us are threatened by that phenomenon, and all of us have a responsibility to stop it. We reiterate our call to our neighbours and other States to cease all support for the perpetrators of such crimes and especially the supply of weapons and explosives. There is no justification for the transfer of arms, mines, rockets or man-portable defence systems to terrorists. We expect all States to do everything in their power to prevent such transfer.

The Chairman: I call on the representative of Brazil, who will speak on behalf of the South American Common Market (MERCOSUR).

Mr. Paranhos (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall speak first on small arms and light weapons and then on anti-personnel mines.

The statistics reported to us show that, at present, one person dies every minute as a victim of a small arm or light weapon. That reality indicates the alarming magnitude of the problem, which also affects our region. For that reason, on behalf of the member States of the South American Common Market (MERCOSUR), Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, and its associated States, Bolivia, Chile and Peru, I wish to make a few observations.

Our countries have repeatedly expressed their will to identify avenues of cooperation at various levels aimed at confronting this scourge. At the global level, our countries have been active, through individual or collective initiatives, in implementing the Programme of Action adopted at the Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Those initiatives were presented at the first Biennial Meeting of States on the implementation of that plan.

Similarly, at the first meeting of the Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, our countries expressed their wishes regarding the need for and the nature of such an instrument. In the deliberations, we agreed that the accumulation of small arms and light weapons, their uncontrolled proliferation and their improper use pose a grave threat to the peace and stability of many regions throughout the world, with humanitarian consequences of a diverse nature. Therefore, a universal and legally binding international instrument would be essential in helping States to confront the problems related to small arms and light weapons.

At the regional level, those principles are reflected in the actions undertaken within the framework of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials, in which the MERCOSUR countries have played a leading role. That has enabled us to make progress, not only in the area of training or information, but also, and principally, in that of cooperation.

At the subregional level, several initiatives are already under way. Some of those initiatives are individual, such as the annual or biennial destruction of small arms and light weapons; others complement regional activities and are aimed at global cooperation. Worthy of note is the work being done by the MERCOSUR Working Group on Firearms and Ammunition, whose last meeting was held in Buenos Aires in March 2004. Among its activities is the process of identifying compatible national legislation, which is being stepped up. Likewise, continued progress is being made on issues related to subregional cooperation, such as creating a joint register of purchasers and sellers of firearms, weapon parts and ammunition; monitoring the movement of registered weapons; and exchanging information in real time.

MERCOSUR is fully aware of the need to work together in the subregional context in order to prevent weapons from being diverted to the illegal market. In this regard, on 7 July, a Memorandum of Understanding was adopted by the members of MERCOSUR regarding the exchange of information on firearms, munitions, explosives and other related materials. Subregional activities will continue in this direction, with a meeting that is scheduled to be held in Brasilia next November.

As to the development of information and awareness campaigns on the dangers of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, our States are counting on the support of various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that have formed their own subregional action network and have taken an active stand and have become an important instrument for such actions.

While our subregion has been successful in certain areas, the magnitude of the problem is great. It knows no borders, and it has the dangerous feature of easy infiltration among the populations of the world that are most vulnerable for different social or economic reasons. For this reason, we want to underscore the importance of cooperation as the only possible way of achieving effective results. This type of cooperation would include financial, technical and legal aspects, involving Governments and civil societies. Any national or subregional initiative will be doomed to fail if it does not achieve regional and global support. We must not forget that we are all faced with the problem and, therefore, its solution rests exclusively on us all.

Turning to anti-personnel mines, MERCOSUR member States and associated States have, for a number of years now, spoken in unison regarding the subject of anti-personnel mines. This is not a coincidence; rather, it is a consequence of the route we are travelling together. Our journey began with a declaration of the subregion as a zone of peace, whereby measures were adopted for the total elimination of the weapons that we are considering here today.

We continued along this route with the declaration of a Western Hemisphere free of anti-personnel mines, in the framework of the Organization of American States. We then moved forward to the signing and ratification of the Ottawa Convention.

But our journey did not end with those treaty signings; we also have begun processes that are at present being implemented by our countries. An example of this is the destruction that took place or is taking place in each country of the arsenals under their jurisdiction in order to fulfil the commitments undertaken. These actions are not limited to the geographical limits of our subregion; they extend to more distant areas, where members of our armed forces are cooperating in the de-mining process within the framework of peacekeeping operations.

The MERCOSUR member States and associated States, as part of a continent that has been a victim of the permanent consequences of anti-personnel mines, recall that the effects of those weapons extend both the time and destructive nature of the conflicts that led to their use. Hence, we are aware of the importance of the universalization of the Ottawa Convention, and we welcome the fact that at the present time the number of signatory States is increasing, and that the results achieved thus far, while insufficient, are encouraging. In this regard, it suffices to recall that over 30 million mines have already been destroyed. We also must remember, however, that over 250 million are still estimated to exist.

In conclusion, may I add that MERCOSUR and its associated States will continue to be committed to the objectives of the Ottawa Convention, not only in its legal or disarmament aspects but also in its humanitarian ones. In this connection, we will attend the Review Conference to take place from 29 November to 3 December of this year in Nairobi. We believe it will be a good opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to the objectives established in the Convention.

Mr. Rivasseau (France) (*spoke in French*): This year, once again, we have noted that the question of conventional weapons, in particular that of small arms and light weapons, has been a subject of major concern for the entire international community. It is on this type of weapons that the most significant progress has been made in terms of disarmament or arms control. Not only has there been a real awareness of the humanitarian scourges resulting from certain types of conventional weapons; but it also seems that the international community has the will to fight them — or at least, to limit the most unacceptable forms of those weapons. My country welcomes these developments. France has participated in, supported and backed all discussions and negotiations under way on this question.

We have made substantial progress over the past few years. The United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects has everyone's support, but its implementation requires a dogged will to succeed. As regards the Ottawa Convention on Landmines, which has shown its effectiveness in humanitarian terms, this year will see the First Review Conference of this important treaty, thanks to which the scourge of mines has diminished and is continuing to diminish, even though significant efforts are still awaited from States parties to that instrument and, even more, from those still outside that regime.

Under the leadership of Ambassador Chris Sanders of the Netherlands, we had the recent conclusion of a legally binding instrument applicable to explosive remains of war annexed to the 1980 Geneva Convention on Conventional Weapons. There also were intensive and productive discussions on anti-vehicle mines and on preventive measures that could be applied to certain types of ammunition, again, within the framework of the 1980 Convention. That Convention has shown its effectiveness and demonstrated that great humanitarian progress could be made in this forum, which has the participation of the major users of certain conventional weapons as well.

Of course, I need to add to this picture by drawing attention to the significance of the negotiations under way on the marking and tracing of light weapons, a French-Swiss initiative to which, Mr. Chairman, you know we are deeply dedicated. The first session of those negotiations, under the highly skilled guidance of Ambassador Thalmann, I think is quite promising.

We cannot rest on our laurels. Even though outstanding progress has been made, a great deal remains to be done. New subjects of concern are emerging; these involve both the legacy of old conflicts and the emergence of new threats in an environment of security that is uncertain and changeable. We believe that the accumulation of certain types of weapons and their uncontrolled distribution, in particular small arms and light weapons and certain types of man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS), as well as the risk that they may be acquired for purposes of destabilization or terrorist acts, is a major concern. These threats must be confronted. All cooperative actions to this end on the national, regional or international level are most welcome.

Today, I would like to underscore a subject of concern that, in our view, deserves discussion in the General Assembly — namely, the stockpiling of surplus conventional weapons. Within the European space, we have noted over the last few years increased requests for assistance from various States confronted with the management of significant stocks of surplus conventional weapons. Those stocks, accumulated for several years now, contain obsolete, dangerous munitions that fulfil no imperative security need. There are often stockpiled in dangerous conditions, entailing the risk of explosion near populated areas. In addition, there is the risk of environmental impact and the risk of those munitions falling into the hands of non-State actors.

Bulgaria expressed the hope that this debate would take place. We can only welcome that initiative, which reflects the necessary awareness of States vis-à-vis this problem. A draft decision has been submitted to the First Committee, of which we are a sponsor.

France believes that a more intensive debate on this question could usefully begin next year.

Mr. Hansen (Norway): Anti-personnel mines, unexploded ordnance and the proliferation of small arms pose a serious challenge to human security. That challenge must be dealt with in multilateral forums and meet with a multilateral response.

The United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons is part of our collective response. Its full implementation is an urgent and important task. Next year's biennial meeting will provide an opportunity to consider the national, regional and global steps taken to implement the Programme.

Norway supports the work of the Open-ended Working Group on the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons and highly appreciates the efforts of its Chair, Ambassador Thalmann of Switzerland. We hope for a successful outcome of the negotiations on an international instrument and will continue to contribute to that objective. Norway believes that we should aim for a legally binding instrument.

The illicit brokering of small arms is also a key concern. Brokering remains largely unregulated, as only approximately 20 countries worldwide have legislation in that area. To prevent illicit brokering, legitimate and licit activities in this area need to be regulated. Under the Dutch-Norwegian initiative on illicit brokering, we and the Netherlands have been working together with regional organizations to help countries establish such legislation. We believe regional organizations also have an important role to play in international cooperation, which is necessary for implementing laws that regulate small arms brokering.

Norway considers it important and timely to go ahead and examine more closely whether there is a need for an international instrument on brokering. Consultations carried out by the Secretary-General since the previous session of the First Committee, on the basis of last year's resolution, show that the issue is relevant. We hope that we can reach an agreement on starting such work soon and that we can reflect that in this year's omnibus resolution on small arms and light weapons.

Effective systems for information on and verification of end-users and end-use of small arms are essential to control not only brokering but all aspects of illicit trade in small arms. That issue also figures in the United Nations Programme of Action. Time is ripe for consultation among States on how to establish such systems for end-user certificates.

It is our hope that we will be able to report on good progress in these and other areas at next year's biennial meeting and agree on further steps at the 2006 Review Conference.

The easy availability and mobility of man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS) make this weapon ideal for terrorists and other non-State actors. The illicit transfer of MANPADS poses a real threat to civil aviation and constitutes a grave security concern. The draft resolution presented by Australia is timely and welcome and enjoys our full support.

The Mine Ban Convention is a success. Every day, its implementation strengthens human security and reduces humanitarian risk for civil populations. However, landmines still threaten the life and well-being of people in all regions of the world. It is a real and serious obstacle to return, reconstruction, development and normalization. It is possible to rid the world of that threat. That is the aim of the Convention. Next month, the First Review Conference of the Mine Ban Convention will take place in Nairobi. At the Nairobi meeting, we must recommit to finishing the job and decide how to address the remaining challenges, universalize the Convention, destroy stockpiles, clear mines and assist victims.

The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) has been strengthened with a new legally binding Protocol on explosive remnants of war. Hopefully, that new instrument will be ratified swiftly so that it can soon enter into force and enhance the safety of people on the ground. To further reduce the humanitarian risk caused by the use of certain munitions, the next logical step is to develop an instrument on measures to prevent munitions from becoming explosive remnants of war. We are actively engaged in the CCW Group of Governmental Experts, which considers the implementation of principles of international humanitarian law and the design of certain munitions and submunitions. We look forward to continuing those important discussions.

It is also time to start negotiating on a new protocol dealing with the humanitarian challenges posed by mines other than anti-personnel mines. We are happy to co-sponsor the draft resolution on the CCW submitted by Sweden and hope it can be adopted without a vote.

Ms. McDonald (New Zealand): While weapons of mass destruction understandably dominate today's headlines and the concerns of Member States, this class of weapons should not distract the international community's attention from the deaths, injuries and injustices that are caused every day by the illegal use and misuse of conventional weapons. In a number of forums, New Zealand continues to work towards strengthening international humanitarian law and reducing the excessive and unnecessary harm caused by conventional weapons.

On small arms, we strongly support the statement made by the Ambassador of Samoa on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum. While much of our work on small arms continues to be focused on preventing gun violence in the Pacific, we are increasingly aware of the lack of binding international controls on the small arms trade that continues to fuel armed conflicts around the world. For that reason, New Zealand will be lending its full support to Oxfam's initiative for an arms trade treaty. We commend Oxfam's work in taking a new approach to stopping the irresponsible transfer of small arms to countries that violate human rights and international humanitarian law.

The [illegible]i Summit, scheduled to take place later this year, will represent a landmark event for the Ottawa Convention banning the use of anti-personnel mines. The universalization of the Convention, the mobilization of resources for mine action, increased understanding and attention to the problems faced by victims and the strength of the norm against the use of anti-personnel mines will stand as testimony to the commitment of States parties, international organizations and non-governmental organizations towards realizing the objective of a world free of anti-personnel mines.

New Zealand continues to strongly support work under way on the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). Last year, we welcomed the agreement on Protocol V to the CCW addressing explosive remnants of war. Protocol V broke new ground by recognizing that parties to a conflict have an obligation to take responsibility for the munitions they have deployed and to take measures to reduce the risk of harm to civilians.

New Zealand is currently working towards ratification of the Protocol. We believe that the ongoing relevance of the CCW Convention will depend on its response to the concern that the international community is voicing with increasing strength about the unnecessary suffering that submunitions cause to civilians.

Mr. Niang (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I will focus exclusively on small arms and light weapons, particularly in West Africa.

In the course of the last decade, in the West African region, eight million firearms — half of them used in criminal activities — killed three million people, including two million children, and left five million homeless. This has been compounded by, and even caused by, a rise in mercenary activities and a weakening in the political and social fabric of many States of the region, along with its corollary, the pauperization of large segments of the population.

However, it must be recognized that for a few months now this apocalyptic picture has been yielding to hope, as many countries of the subregion have experienced the beginnings of peace that we hope will be lasting. That normalization was brought about, inter alia, by the strong mobilization on the part of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) with the support of the international community. That mobilization for peace and security has, however, never been lacking in our subregion. Suffice it to recall the Senegalese experience and that of the Economic Community of West African States.

The dangers of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) were understood very early on by the Government of Senegal, which, in 1966, enacted a law on arms and munitions in conjunction with the strictest of controls on the activities of those who produce, market and supply weapons, which were all registered by the State, and also in conjunction with an arsenal of administrative and criminal sanctions levied on violators. The existence of this mechanism explains to a great extent the very low level of illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons in Senegal.

In the West African context, States, having learned from the recurrence of brutal conflicts that had erupted here and there, had the wisdom to see the potential seriousness of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, and in 1998 adopted the Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa. That moratorium was rounded out by a framework for implementation called the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED), which is divided into nine priority areas, including the promotion of a culture of peace in the region, the collection and destruction of arms surpluses and the strengthening of border controls.

The results obtained thus far are decisive and encouraging. I therefore want to ask Member States to give their complete support to draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.21, which was submitted by Mali on behalf of ECOWAS and is entitled, "Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them".

But, do those efforts at the national and subregional levels suffice to eliminate that scourge? What about the global context? At the international level it is true that progress has been made. An example of that is the adoption of the Programme of Action that resulted from the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, held here in New York in July 2001. Nonetheless, a closer look reveals that bolder measures are needed to root out that problem. My delegation therefore hopes that the efforts of the Working Group on the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons will lead to the clear choice of a credible legal instrument that will serve as a deterrent because it is legally binding.

In the view of my delegation, this outcome would be a good way to counter the whole organized network of traffickers who lurk in the shadows, lured by the appeal of easy profits. The fate of millions of people in West Africa and elsewhere in the world would thereby be considerably improved.

Ms. Nicholson (Canada): Conventional weapons directly affect people in their daily lives and in their immediate communities. Our approach to many conventional weapons issues goes well beyond traditional arms control and is impelled by human security, humanitarian concerns and international humanitarian and human rights law. Positive progress has been witnessed in the last year, reflecting widespread collective determination to address the issues of small arms, landmines and conventional weapons. It is clear, however, that much remains to be done.

States have accepted the responsibility to protect their citizens from the negative and far-reaching impact of the uncontrolled proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons with the adoption of the United Nations Programme of Action in 2001. We are all familiar with the perils associated with those weapons, which kill an estimated 300,000 people per year in conflict situations alone. But those are not just empty numbers. They are attached to real financial and human costs for States.

The easy availability and misuse of small arms impede economic development, hinder access to basic services such as health and education, contribute to criminal and gender-based violence, and destroy community livelihoods. Uncontrolled proliferation and misuse also interfere with conflict prevention measures, fuel armed conflict, obstruct provision of humanitarian assistance, and cause damage and delay to peace-building efforts. Those realities should be recognized and reflected in our work here in the First Committee.

In 2001 States committed themselves to take action to address both supply and demand with respect to the illicit trade in small arms. Today we have the opportunity to make real progress on that issue by adopting a credible and effective resolution on small arms and light weapons that addresses its important aspects. The activities of arms brokers are central to the illicit small arms trade, diverting weapons to illicit destinations and undesirable end-users. Numerous United Nations panels have determined time and again that brokers undermined arms embargoes to countries such as Angola, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Somalia.

Given the significant challenge that illicit brokering poses to international efforts to control the proliferation and misuse of small arms, it is Canada's view that a group of governmental experts is essential to furthering progress. Such a group's report would provide a better understanding of this complex issue, informing States as we consider the best way forward to combat illicit brokering. The very important work of the Open-ended Working Group on marking and tracing, which Canada strongly supports, is scheduled to conclude in June 2005, so that a separate process of such a group of experts would not overlap or interfere with this process in any way.

Canada's priority is to see real and substantive progress achieved at the 2005 and 2006 United Nations meetings on the Programme of Action and to deliver on our commitments to reduce the human suffering caused by small arms and light weapons. In our view, important issues deserving international attention include developing common principles on transfer controls, civilian possession of military-style weapons, transfers to non-State actors and enforcement of United Nations arms embargoes. Further policy research and development is needed to identify gaps in international responses, allocate resources accordingly and prepare to advance our work in 2005 and 2006. Now is the time to act creatively and constructively to achieve our common goals.

Another area where we can make people safer is the elimination of the scourge of anti-personnel landmines. This is a landmark year for global efforts against such mines. The first Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention, which will take place at the 2004 Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World, is expected to be the most important gathering in this campaign since the Convention's international signing conference in 1997 in Ottawa.

In Nairobi, we will celebrate the significant progress achieved in our common effort to spare civilians and communities from the threat of anti-personnel mines. The Convention has become a key instrument for human security, addressing the humanitarian, disarmament, and development aspects of anti-personnel mines. Significant challenges remain, however, in order to finish the job of fully implementing the Convention, which will be a key focus of the Nairobi Summit.

The conference's preparations have been characterized by the same partnership and sense of common purpose that have marked the Ottawa process since its inception. We expect this spirit of cooperation to result in an ambitious action plan, where States parties will commit to intensifying and accelerating their efforts in mine clearance and risk education, in victim assistance, in the destruction of stockpiles, and in universalizing this Convention and strengthening the stigmatization of the use and production of and trade in anti-personnel mines.

We look forward to a declaration which sends a clear and determined message to the world, reaffirming the unwavering commitment at the highest possible levels to sustaining attention and forever eradicating the threat of anti-personnel mines.

In addition to our emphasis on continued progress in ridding the world of the threat of anti-personnel mines, Canada remains concerned with the impact of other types of unexploded ordnance. We strongly support the new legally binding Protocol within the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), addressing the post-conflict aspects of explosive remnants of war, whose implementation will make a difference on the ground. We are in the process of preparing our ratification and encourage all States to do likewise, so that it can enter into force as soon as possible.

While the adoption of this Protocol is an important success, our work is not yet complete. Some specific weapons continue to have a significant impact on civilians and to hinder humanitarian operations. Canada therefore wants the CCW to continue discussions aimed at improving the design of specific munitions likely to result in explosive remnants of war, including submunitions, with a view to minimizing the humanitarian risk of those munitions becoming explosive remnants of war.

In the area of anti-vehicle mines, we support increased technical standards and the prohibition of the use of such undetectable mines; we are a co-sponsor of the 30-nation proposal; and we will be working to achieve agreement at the forthcoming CCW annual meeting on a broad negotiating mandate with a view to adopting a legally binding instrument.

In conclusion, making people safer from armed violence must be our benchmark for measuring progress and furthering work to address these multifaceted and important issues. Canada's overarching approach to these issues focuses on making people and their communities safer. We will continue our active engagement in various regional and multilateral bodies, including our chairmanship of the Human Security Network, to achieve this goal. These are all areas where real progress, in both policy terms and on the ground, has been achieved. Let us all remain determined to further advance in this direction.

Mr. Lezona (Congo) (*spoke in French*): Anti-personnel mines and explosive ordnance hamper the free movement of people in certain areas of the world and stand in the way of the use of arable land — a major impediment to development. These deadly and devastating devices contribute to exacerbating poverty, destitution and suffering, with regard not only to the victims but also to their families and communities.

The Republic of the Congo, which has in the south-west zones that are presumed to be mined, is now engaged in taking national measures to ensure the effective implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and of the Common African Position on Anti-personnel Landmines, adopted by the African ministers on 23 September 2004 in New York.

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to thank once again the Government of Canada, whose financial support allowed the Government of the Congo to organize in Brazzaville in 2003 an awareness-raising workshop on the implementation of the Ottawa Convention as well the destruction of a stockpile of 5,136 anti-personnel landmines from the military arsenal in September of that year.

Regarding demining, an expert mission was sent to evaluate the extent of the zones that are presumed to be mined. My delegation appeals to the international community to provide us with assistance to implement the humanitarian objectives of the Convention.

My country, moreover, has great expectations of the Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention planned for 29 November to 3 December 2004 at Nairobi, Kenya, with a view to the international community's universalizing the Convention.

That is why my country, wishing to see the advent of a world without mines and a better tomorrow, has — as it always has in the past — joined other countries in sponsoring the draft resolution on this item, which is contained in document A/C.1/59/L.40 on the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

Ms. Sanders (United States of America): It is a pleasure, Sir, to see you chairing this meeting.

The United States is committed to advancing the humanitarian agenda with respect to landmines. As part of its landmine policy, the United States has decided to pursue, in the Conference on Disarmament, negotiation of an international ban on the sale or export of all persistent landmines. The United States believes that this proposal would complement, not harm, related activities in other forums.

The United States is pursuing a multifaceted approach involving several forums to address the humanitarian problems posed by the indiscriminate use of persistent landmines. We want to take advantage of the unique qualities of these various forums.

The framework provided by the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) is well suited to addressing issues involving the use of landmines. The United States, along with Denmark and 28 other sponsors, is pursuing at the CCW a proposal to subject anti-vehicle mines to restrictions similar to those that the CCW's Amended Mines Protocol currently places on anti-personnel landmines.

The Group of Governmental Experts of the CCW States parties held a two-week meeting in Geneva on that proposal in July, and the Group will meet again in early November.

The Conference on Disarmament, however, is the international community's primary forum for multilateral arms control negotiations. As such, it is well suited to address issues such as the sale and export of mines. The proposed ban on the sale or export of persistent landmines would make no distinction between anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines or between remotely delivered and hand-emplaced mines. It therefore would cover mine types beyond those addressed in the CCW's Amended Mines Protocol or the 30-nation proposal in the CCW.

However, since the proposed ban would deal only with sales and exports, it would not touch upon use, stockpiling or production, as other instruments or proposals do. This proposal in no way detracts from or dilutes the Ottawa Convention. Ottawa Convention parties can fulfil their commitments under the Convention and simultaneously support this complementary effort to reduce the long-term landmine threat to innocent civilians.

The United States hopes that its negotiating partners in Geneva will agree to begin negotiating on a ban on the sale or export of persistent landmines when the Conference on Disarmament reconvenes in January.

Mr. Owoseni (Nigeria): I am very happy to see you, Sir, chairing this meeting.

The problem of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is of particular concern to Nigeria, as it constitutes a major impediment to peace, stability, security and economic development in many developing countries. Such arms continue to have devastating consequences on the African continent given their capacity to fuel, intensify and prolong conflicts. I need not mention the destruction, in catastrophic proportions, of the economic and social infrastructure in the affected countries resulting from the illicit use of these weapons.

As conflicts drag on, the need for more arms grows, thus perpetuating the vicious circle. That is simply because small arms and light weapons are the weapons of choice in most conflict situations. It is estimated that there are about 650 million small arms in the world today, and about 500,000 people die each year from their use. Of the estimated 4 million war-related deaths during the 1990s, 90 per cent of those killed were civilians, and 80 per cent of that number were women and children, mostly victims of the misuse of small arms and light weapons. The proliferation of these weapons has also hindered global humanitarian efforts and exacerbated the phenomenon of child soldiers.

Africa remains the continent most affected by the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. For that reason, the Nigerian delegation welcomes all efforts by the international community to address this problem. In this regard, we wish to re-emphasize the importance of the early and full implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects.

Nigeria recognizes the spirit behind the adoption of this document and believes that it will continue to serve as a guide in our cooperative efforts in tackling the illicit proliferation of small arms. My delegation also reaffirms its commitment to the Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons of December 2000. The position expressed in the Declaration remain as valid today as it was in 2000, when it was adopted.

In this regard, we view as a positive development the recent convening of the first substantive session of the Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. The most crucial issue that this Working Group should now resolve is the issue of the nature of the instrument itself. Considering the extent of the devastation that illicit small arms and light weapons have continued to cause globally, especially in the African region, and the urgent need to curb the menace, it is imperative that the instrument to be negotiated should further advance the political commitments already expressed in the Programme of Action on Small Arms to a higher level.

The proposed instrument should address the problem of tracing illicit small arms and light weapons in a more fundamental way. It is, therefore, essential that such an instrument is legally binding, for its effective implementation. It is our belief that the success of the Working Group will have a positive impact on the forthcoming second Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects at the National, Regional and Global Levels in 2005 and the review conference of the Programme of Action on Small Arms in 2006.

In Africa, one of the greatest difficulties in controlling the illicit proliferation of small arms is the fact of their easy accessibility to non-State actors. Consistent calls on the international community, particularly arms producing and supplying countries, to limit the trade in small arms and light weapons to Governments and registered licensed traders has been largely ignored. This matter was underscored in the Bamako Declaration. It is worthy of note that the failure of the international community to hold arms manufacturers, their agents and brokers to account has been largely responsible for the uncontrolled illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Africa, with its attendant consequences on the continent.

It is common knowledge that one of the most effective strategies for dealing with the problem of illicit small arms trade is to control it from the source. Many countries, particularly in Africa, are ill-equipped to counter the massive flow of illicit arms into their territories from manufacturers and suppliers, especially in situations where there are willing partners in the form of rebel groups. The international community should, therefore, agree on imposition of appropriate sanctions on arms manufacturers and suppliers who divert their arms exports to illicit networks. The existence of this practice further reinforces the argument for a legally binding instrument on tracing these weapons.

The cooperation of the international community is also needed to intensify efforts in investigating and identifying the link between the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and the illicit exploitation of natural and other resources, particularly those of some countries in Africa. It is common knowledge that the proceeds from illegal exploitation of Africa's natural resources are sometimes channelled into funding illicit arms trade in the continent. We encourage the application of appropriate sanctions to any individual, company, Government or non-State actor that may be found to be involved in this practice.

Many African States have undertaken various initiatives at different levels to address the common challenge of illicit small arms trade. These efforts are made out of a deep concern over the devastating effects of the illicit trade in small and light weapons on peace, security, stability and sustainable development in the continent. Unfortunately, Africa has not had much success in controlling this illicit trade in concrete terms since the United Nations conference on the subject in 2001. Rather, the continent has witnessed continued proliferation of these weapons, resulting, in some cases, in greater problems of political instability and armed conflict.

This regrettable situation may be due in part to lack of means to meet the overwhelming challenge. However, the greatest difficulty by far encountered by African countries is that of lack of international cooperation, particularly from arms suppliers and manufacturers, who maintain the continued influx of illicit small arms into the region. The international community, as represented in this Committee, must seriously address this aspect of the problem.

Illicit trade in small arms has always obstructed the implementation of arms embargoes imposed by the Security Council. The establishment of an independent panel of experts and monitoring mechanisms by the Council to promote compliance with arms embargoes is a welcome development. However, while this measure may be useful in controlling the illegal cross-border movement of small arms into conflict areas, it is ineffective in controlling and eliminating those arms that are already inside the areas of conflict. We therefore emphasize the need for effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes, which should normally include weapons collection, storage and destruction.

Experience has shown that the failure of DDR programmes in many post-conflict situations is principally due to the non-inclusion of such programmes in ceasefire agreements and in the mandates and budgets for United Nations peacekeeping operations. DDR programmes, as well as programmes for weapons collection, storage and destruction, that rely entirely on extrabudgetary resources or voluntary contributions for their implementation often suffer disappointing failures, resulting in some cases in the reignition of armed conflict and consequently in an increased demand for illicit small arms.

It is nevertheless acknowledged that the collapse of DDR programmes could, to some extent, be attributable to the failure of the international community to provide adequate financial assistance to countries emerging from conflict. However, secure funding from the assessed budget for peacekeeping would ensure the return of ex-combatants to their communities under planned reintegration activities, as required by the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1325 (2000). Nigeria, therefore, wishes once again to urge the international community to recognize the crucial importance of incorporating DDR programmes into ceasefire agreements as well as into the mandates and budgets for United Nations peacekeeping operations.

In addressing the threat posed by illicit small arms trafficking, there is need for cooperative relationship between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department for Disarmament Affairs, which would represent the relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly. While the Security Council is responsible for peacekeeping operations and arms embargoes as well as other political measures relating to countries in conflict, the Department for Disarmament Affairs is seized with practical disarmament measures, including responsibility for the regional centres for peace and disarmament. The two Departments have an interest in weapons collection and destruction in post-conflict areas. We appreciate the role of the Coordinating Action on Small Arms (CASA) within the United Nations system. However, a more integral approach involving the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department for Disarmament Affairs is absolutely essential for success in post-conflict peacekeeping initiatives.

Nigeria, for its part, remains committed to the fight against illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, and has, over the years, taken steps and major initiatives in that direction. In 2001, Nigeria joined other member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in renewing, for a second three-year period, the Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa.

On 7 May 2001, two months prior to the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, the Federal Government of Nigeria established the Nigerian National Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons, which maintains a strong permanent relationship with the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat in implementing the Moratorium. We have been steadfast in our respect for this Moratorium. With the establishment of the National Committee, we now have a national arms register and database. The Committee has also organized several training workshops and seminars for stakeholders on the issue of small arms.

Nigeria operates a strict firearms regime as further proof of our determination to keep these weapons out of circulation in the country. Under Nigeria's Firearms Control Act, the possession or acquisition of firearms for personal use requires approval from the highest authority. This effort is extended to the borders. In a three-phase training programme, with support provided by the United States Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, Nigeria has trained over 200 border security personnel in modern methods of interdicting concealments by traffickers and smugglers.

In November 2003, Nigeria initiated and hosted the first tripartite seminar on enhanced border control and security with the neighbouring Republics of Benin and Niger, involving the border agents of the three countries. Our Federal Executive Council has approved the communiqué that emerged from the seminar for implementation. Through regular joint border patrol with our neighbours, we have continued the effort to keep track of the influx of illicit small arms into our country, and have sometimes succeeded in arresting and prosecuting transborder traffickers. Nigeria cooperates with the police from other West African countries in tracing the movement of illicit arms across borders through the Interpol bureau in West Africa, in which we have strong representation.

As a country that cherishes an international environment governed by peace and security, Nigeria has spent more than $10 billion in the last 15 years on various efforts to stem the tide of recurrent conflicts in West Africa caused by the illicit circulation in the subregion of an estimated eight million small arms and light weapons. In addition to this, thousands of Nigerian soldiers and civilians have lost their lives in this peacekeeping endeavour in the affected countries. Nigeria continues to provide sanctuary to refugees fleeing from some of these conflicts at enormous financial cost to the Federal Government.

Nigeria's unrelenting fight against illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons was further advanced during the second quarter of this year with the recovery and confiscation of 2,564 illegal firearms and 118,574 assorted munitions. Of those, 1,065 assorted small arms and 953 recovered munitions were publicly destroyed on 24 May 2004, while 1,139 illicit firearms and 1,474 munitions were destroyed on 2 September 2004. Earlier this year, a three-day ECOWAS Conference on combating illicit small arms brokering and trafficking was held in Nigeria's capital, Abuja, from 22 to 24 March, under the sponsorship of the Governments of the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom. The Conference was successful in sensitizing ECOWAS Member States to the problem of illicit brokering and helped in developing a common understanding on ways to address the problem, including subregional coordination mechanisms.

Recently, Nigeria moved to initiate cooperative activities with the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs regarding a national action plan and capacity-building through the training of arms-related security operatives. It is our hope that those nascent proposals will be fully realized.

While we underline the importance of practical measures to eliminate the threat of illicit small arms, Nigeria has always believed in conflict-prevention measures and the pursuit of negotiated solutions to conflicts as the most effective means of minimizing the demand for illicit small arms. The international community should pay particular attention to the need to adopt those measures that provide the best strategies for peace.

In that connection, there is a need to create a good political atmosphere that enhances harmonious relationships at the national and international levels and a sense of belonging. Emphasis should be given to promoting structures and processes that strengthen democracy, human rights, the rule of law and good governance, as well as economic recovery and growth, as means of eliminating conflicts and guaranteeing durable peace. That is in consonance with the spirit of the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the Constitutive Act of the African Union.

It has been recognized that there is a lack of international support for development efforts by States in a position to do so, and the crushing debt burden continues to be a major obstacle to the achievement of those lofty objectives. Nonetheless, the Nigerian delegation wishes to urge all nations to be guided by the principle of pacific settlement of disputes, as enshrined in the United Nations Charter, as that is the most enduring solution to the problem of illicit small arms.

I cannot conclude this statement without referring to the forthcoming first Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention on Landmines, known as the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World, to be held in Nairobi from 29 November to 3 December this year. The Review Conference represents an excellent opportunity not only to evaluate the progress that has been made in implementing the Convention in the last five years but also to chart the course for complete eradication of weapons of that kind by the time of the second Review Conference in 2009. We therefore call upon all States parties to attend the Conference at the highest possible level. As a State party to the Convention, Nigeria has complied with the obligations it has assumed under the instrument, in particular by submitting its transparency report as stipulated under article VII. We endorse the Ministerial Declaration adopted here in New York on 23 September 2004, containing the African Common Position on the issue of anti-personnel landmines.

Ms. Mangray (Guyana): Allow me at the outset to express our sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your skilful stewardship as Chairman of this Committee, as well as to all the members of the Bureau. Your leadership thus far has confirmed that our confidence in your abilities is well placed.

Countries currently face serious security threats from existing or newly introduced conditions and challenges. Those include drug trafficking and money-laundering, HIV/AIDS, economic disenfranchisement, poverty and social exclusion, transnational organized crime, environmental problems, including the transshipment of nuclear waste through the Caribbean Sea, natural disasters, the influx of smuggled and sophisticated arms, terrorism and the dumping of criminal deportees from the developed countries. As can be seen, the large majority of cases of conflict are fuelled by small arms and light weapons. The panoply of threats, although varied, is often interlinked and requires a holistic and global response.

As is well known, arms trafficking is linked to activities such as drug trafficking and terrorism, which directly impacts national security. Guyana and other countries in the Caribbean have been especially vulnerable to the armed violence generated by drug trafficking. We would therefore hope that the international instrument on marking and tracing currently being negotiated by the Open-ended Working Group would help in reducing that vulnerability. Perhaps the establishment of a clearing house for international information and other mechanisms endowed with broad monitoring capacities could, hopefully, break the connection between the illicit trade in small arms and criminal activities. Bearing in mind that this serious problem has many technical aspects, it would be wise to provide for input from the existing specialized bodies of the United Nations system.

The international community has been faced with the destabilizing effects and the security implications of the excessive accumulation and transfer of those arms and weapons, as expressed by some of the previous speakers. We would like to stress the negative impact that small arms trafficking has on both the security and the development of States. That is of vital concern, particularly for small States that do not have the technical and financial capability to deal with the threat that the illicit traffic in small arms poses. It may, therefore, be helpful for the text to analyse that impact more thoroughly in order truly to address the problem in all its aspects and to establish the link between disarmament and development. In that regard, my delegation is of the view that reference to the those linkages should be made in the text.

We hope that the instrument will reflect a strong political and legal commitment, which is needed to curb the illicit trafficking in small arms. We are pleased to note that the Open-ended Working Group has produced useful inputs. Its findings offer a good start to our work. We also welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms (A/59/193), published in July this year. My delegation intends to participate in the ongoing consultations and hopes that the outcome document enjoys the prominence it deserves.

As a small and vulnerable State, Guyana attaches importance to the maintenance of international peace and security. In that regard, Guyana has recently ratified and acceded to the Convention on the Safety and Security of United Nations and Associated Personnel, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the optional protocol to that Convention, all of which reflects the Government's continued commitment to security issues.

Furthermore, it is now increasingly recognized that the United Nations Disarmament Centres and other regional organizations may be best suited, by virtue of their proximity, to play a valuable role in assisting in finding solutions. As was seen in the campaign against the use of landmines, some of those bodies were instrumental in helping to secure a ban on that horrific class of weapons. They may very well do the same with respect to illicit arms and light weapons.

In conclusion, in the words of a famous writer, strong reasons make strong actions. Our task is made especially urgent by the realization that, despite our perseverance, the achievement of international peace and security remains fraught with pitfalls.

Ms. Oudine (Djibouti) (*spoke in French*): As this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor, I extend my sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the Chairmanship of the Committee. I also congratulate the other member of the Bureau. Finally, I thank your predecessor for the remarkable manner in which he carried out the work of our Committee during the previous session.

Many efforts have been made, and much progress accomplished, aimed at controlling the proliferation and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. However, it is a battle that is far from being won.

In fact, never before in the history of humankind have weapons been so numerous. Given the wide range of the problem, as well as the constant threat it poses to security, the illegal trafficking in small arms and light weapons is, without any doubt, both a danger to populations and a destabilizing element for States.

Although the unregulated trafficking in millions of weapons may not be the primary cause of a conflict, it certainly increases the resort to violence, delays negotiations that would lead to solutions and increases the suffering of civilian populations.

In addition to the efforts my country has made at the national level, Djibouti is convinced of the need for coordinated multilateral action to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, given the transborder nature of that phenomenon.

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is a fundamental evil that has a negative impact on security for populations. It is also an obstacle to peace and stability and to economic development in many countries, particularly those in Africa.

In fact, the proliferation of small arms increases insecurity, whether or not there is a conflict. The fact that such weapons are easy to use and are often available for low prices on the illegal market causes them to be available to anyone. That produces a vicious circle, as the presence of weapons worsens insecurity, which, in turn, creates greater demand for those weapons.

Those weapons continue to have a devastating effect on the African continent, given their capacity to exacerbate and prolong conflicts, which has led to the loss of millions of lives, especially the lives of civilians — women and children. In fact, an entire generation of children are forced to become part of the conflict — they grow up within a culture of violence, threatened by death.

The Republic of Djibouti is fully committed to the struggle against the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. That is why, once again, my country is co-sponsoring draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.43, "The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects".

Djibouti also participated in, and signed, the Nairobi Ministerial Declaration, at the second Ministerial Review Conference, held in Nairobi on 20 and 21 April 2004. In that regard, Djibouti has already established a national focal point. My country is also delighted at the work being done aimed at the prevention and elimination of, and the struggle against, the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We are particularly pleased at the establishment of the Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, which will enable States to mark and trace illicit weapons, in a reliable and efficient manner. We are confident that the results of the Open-ended Working Group will be a fine contribution to the control of those weapons. That bears witness to the political will and consensus on the continent itself to fight against the proliferation of weapons.

Mr. Pfanzelter (Austria): Austria fully aligns itself with the statement made by the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union. I have asked for the floor today in order to highlight the particular importance that my country attaches to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

Austria, as a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.40, would like to thank Thailand for its tireless efforts towards obtaining the broadest possible support for the draft resolution.

Anti-personnel mines are weapons that do not discriminate between combatants and innocent civilians. They cause terrible human suffering long after the end of an armed conflict and constitute a serious impediment to post-conflict reconstruction and development. 143 States have acknowledged that it is only through the total elimination of those weapons that we can eventually solve that global scourge. We therefore strongly urge those States that have so far remained outside the Convention to re-evaluate their position and to join the Convention.

During the past five years, we have made remarkable progress towards the implementation of the Convention's humanitarian, development and disarmament objectives. Nevertheless, anti-personnel mines continue to be used, and still cause many thousands of new victims each year. Universalization remains a challenge. There are still large stockpiles of anti-personnel mines around the globe. Large mined areas still need to be cleared.

Next month — from 29 November to 3 December 2004 — the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World will take place in Kenya. That Conference will be the highest profile event on the landmines issue since the signing of the Convention in Ottawa in 1997. Austria is very honoured to have been designated — in the person of Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch — to preside over this extremely important event.

The substantive preparations for the Nairobi Summit are going very well. There has been great interest and active participation. A wealth of information and input have been provided by the States parties, the United Nations system, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, and others.

I would also like to thank the organizers of the regional meetings that have taken place all around the globe during the past months. The meetings — most of them held in mine-affected regions — have provided invaluable input into the preparations for the Nairobi Summit and have contributed to raising awareness for that important event.

The Nairobi Summit offers us the opportunity to achieve five main objectives — first, to bring the landmines issue back into the public consciousness; secondly, to renew and reinforce political and financial commitments; thirdly, to reiterate our responsibility to clear mined areas and to assist victims; fourthly, to establish a comprehensive and concrete plan of action and fifthly, to increase worldwide acceptance of the Convention. The Summit means recommitting ourselves to resolving the outstanding landmine issues. It is, therefore, of particular importance that all States — and in particular the mine-affected States — are represented in Nairobi at the highest possible level during the high-level segment on 2 and 3 December 2004.

The expectations for the Nairobi Summit are very high. The success of the Nairobi Summit and, indeed of the whole Convention, will ultimately be measured by a renewed commitment to solving the problem of anti-personnel mines. That is a real challenge, and we shall succeed in meeting the challenge if we continue to work in the same spirit of partnership that has so far characterized this remarkable and unique process.

Mr. Shaw (Australia): Australia is strongly committed to addressing the problems posed by the proliferation and excessive accumulation of conventional weapons. The illicit possession and use of even a relatively small number of conventional weapons can exacerbate law and order problems and internal conflicts, undermining good governance and economic development in many regions. We are pleased to co-sponsor the draft resolution entitled "The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects".

Australia has been an active player in supporting measures to curb the illicit small arms trade. In particular, we have been working closely with regional partners to address the challenge of small arms proliferation in the Pacific region. This year, Australia collaborated with Fiji, Japan and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific in holding a regional small-arms seminar focused on implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action and on model weapons-control legislation developed by the Pacific Islands Forum. The seminar was an important step in a sustained effort by Australia to bring about better regulation and practices to deal with the most serious proliferation issue in our region.

Australia welcomes the considerable progress to date in negotiations on an instrument on the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons, and looks forward to a successful conclusion to the negotiations. We also recognize the importance of regulating the activities of arms brokers in order to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The commencement of negotiations on brokering will be an important international priority, once marking and tracing negotiations have concluded.

As a strong supporter of the Mine Ban Convention, Australia welcomes the recent accession of Estonia and Papua New Guinea. We look to the forthcoming Review Conference as an opportunity not only to review progress over the previous five years but, more importantly, to shape future directions for mine action. As co-Chairman of the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration, Australia will continue to promote awareness and encourage support of activities addressing the needs of mine victims. We are pleased to co-sponsor the draft resolution entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction".

Australia welcomes the conclusion of Protocol V, on explosive remnants of war, to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. We look forward to the early commencement of negotiations on a new instrument to address humanitarian concerns associated with mines other than anti-personnel mines. Australian is pleased to co-sponsor the draft resolution entitled "Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects".

Mr. Amayo (Kenya): I would like to address an issue of great concern to my country, namely the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction — the Ottawa Convention. At the outset, I would like to thank the delegation of Thailand for introducing draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.40 on the Ottawa Convention and to assure the Committee of our full support.

Anti-personnel landmines are among the most inhumane weapons devised by man. They maim and kill innocent civilians. They render people destitute by depriving them of their livelihoods in the affected regions. It is therefore no wonder that 143 States parties have now ratified the Ottawa Convention. That commitment has strengthened the international resolve to ban this horrendous weapon. Kenya's commitment to the elimination of the use of landmines is demonstrated in the active role it has played in the implementation of the Convention in the subregion, including through mine-clearance efforts in the Horn of Africa. These efforts complement Kenya's contribution to the promotion of peace, conflict resolution and reconciliation in the subregion. It is only through the total elimination of those weapons that the menace can be obliterated.

Despite the tremendous progress made in the achievement of the Convention's humanitarian and development objectives, the universalization of the Convention is yet to be achieved. The destruction of anti-personnel mines remains technically and financially challenging, as does the demining of affected regions.

In this regard, Kenya is honoured to be hosting the first Review Conference of the States parties to the Convention, to be held in Nairobi from 29 November to 3 December 2004. My delegation attaches great importance to this event, which has also been dubbed the 2004 Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World.

The Nairobi Summit will be a crucial milestone in the operationalization of the Ottawa Convention. As the first Review Conference since the entry into force of the Convention in 1999, the Summit will be reviewing critical issues pertaining to the Convention, in particular the status and operation of the Convention, deadlines for demining and the destruction of stockpiles of mines by States parties, as well as assistance to victims of mines. It will take stock of the progress made since its entry into force in 1999 and set the agenda for action over the next five years to ensure the achievement of the humanitarian objectives of the Convention.

Substantive preparations for the Nairobi Summit are at an advanced stage. It is anticipated that world leaders and other dignitaries will attend that important event in recognition of the tremendous achievements made so far by the Convention in advancing human development worldwide.

It is hoped first, that the Nairobi Summit will stress the determination by the international community to free the world of anti-personnel landmines and thereby put an end to the suffering and casualties caused by these weapons. Secondly, it is hoped that it will assess the progress that has been made in ending the suffering caused by anti-personnel landmines since the Convention was established. Thirdly, it is hoped that it will be attended by the majority of States parties and civil society, as well as by world leaders.

It is expected that the Nairobi Summit will be a major forum, enabling participants to discuss developments relating to the global problem of landmines since the historic Convention was signed in Ottawa in 1977 and to come up with viable solutions to the problem.

It is also expected to adopt a powerful declaration and action plan recommitting the parties to overcoming the remaining challenges, in particular putting an end to the production of anti-personnel mines and mobilizing the necessary resources to help badly affected countries to clear mined areas, as well as to assist landmine survivors.

It is also expected to serve as a platform to highlight the plight of Africa as the most mine-affected region and to provide a necessary forum allowing the continent to play a leading role in resolving the anti-personnel landmine problem.

Kenya wishes to recognize and thank all countries and organizations whose efforts have contributed to the preparations for the Nairobi Summit. The stakes are high — but so are the stakes for those in daily danger from anti-personnel mines. The success of the Summit will, therefore, be the success of the international community. On behalf of the people and the Government of Kenya, I wish to take this opportunity to invite the members of this Committee to participate at the highest possible level.

Mr. Costea (Romania): Allow me to begin by reaffirming Romania's full endorsement of yesterday's statement presented on behalf of the European Union (EU) by Ambassador Christiaan Sanders of the Netherlands. For the sake of the effectiveness to which all members of the First Committee aspire, I will be brief and fact- and figures-oriented in my statement.

In reviewing the most important developments that took place this year in my country in the area of conventional arms, the most remarkable achievement by far was the completion of the destruction of anti-personnel landmines. An official ceremony organized on 25 March, significantly entitled "Romania free of anti-personnel mines", finalized the process of eliminating one million anti-personnel landmines one year ahead of the deadline set forth by the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and just a few days before the fifth anniversary of its entry into force.

A month prior to this national accomplishment, on 2 and 3 February, Romania hosted the Reay Group workshop on the progress in meeting the aims of the Ottawa Convention on Landmines in southeastern Europe. On this occasion, representatives of the countries in the region, of donor States and of international structures involving mine action assessed progress on such issues as the universalization of the Convention in our region, the stage of stockpile destruction and challenges yet to be faced, especially with respect to victim assistance, resource mobilization and national implementation.

We believe that all these actions provide concrete and significant evidence of our region's commitment to the goals of the Ottawa Convention on Landmines. That commitment will be appropriately recorded at the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World. It is also our strong belief that the lessons learned in this respect and, more specifically, the lessons learned through promoting regional cooperation could be quite useful for other regions that are still struggling to rid themselves of this murderous legacy of past conflicts.

Romania also attaches particular importance to developments under the framework of the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW). I would like to take this opportunity to announce that we are in the process of preparing the internal package necessary for the ratification of Protocol V of the CCW on explosive remnants of war.

We take similar interest in the developments with regard to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on small arms. While taking national action with respect to small arms and light weapons and ammunition surpluses destruction, marking, record-keeping, expert control — including brokering — and tracing, we truly hope that all these issues will soon be debated and agreed upon on within the framework of the United Nations, in order to eradicate the scourge of these types of weapons and eliminate the unjustified humanitarian suffering they cause.

Ms. Mtshali (South Africa): South Africa is committed to a policy of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control that covers all weapons of mass destruction and extends to concerns relating to the proliferation of conventional weapons.

The current stalemate on issues related to nuclear weapons in particular is in stark contrast to the progress made on issues related to conventional arms. Indeed, substantive meetings relating to small arms, anti-personnel mines and other conventional weapons deemed to have indiscriminate effects or causing superfluous injury fill our disarmament calendar. The proliferation and excessive accumulation of small arms and light weapons continues to pose a threat to the security and stability of many nations, inhibits their development and undermines good governance. The human suffering caused by these weapons needs to be addressed urgently, in a practical and action-oriented manner.

South Africa therefore attaches great importance to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The numerous small arms initiatives being undertaken at the national, regional and global levels is a testimony to the commitment by Member States and the non-governmental community to implement and facilitate the implementation of the 2001 Programme of Action on small arms.

In approximately 18 months, we will be reviewing this Programme of Action on small arms and, more importantly, we will decide how to further proceed with actions to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. The vehicle to further strengthen our collective action on small arms is the preparatory process for the Review Conference and the Conference itself. An important meeting leading to this review conference is the second Biennial Meeting on small arms scheduled for June 2005.

We should not only have already started with our substantive preparations for these meetings, but we should also, at an early stage, focus on procedural issues such as reaching an understanding on who will chair the Biennial Meeting and the Review Conference itself. Early preparations will greatly facilitate the successful outcome we are all working for.

South Africa continues to believe that, for a tracing instrument on illicit small arms and light weapons to be effective and practical, it is important that the scope of such an instrument be as comprehensive in nature as possible and that it should not be restricted to State-owned small arms and light weapons only, but also include civilian-owned weapons of this nature. We also continue to believe that the Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons should examine how it could include in such an instrument the issue of marking, record-keeping and tracing of ammunition and explosives, as it is widely accepted that these are some of the problems associated with small arms and light weapons.

Much progress has been made in eradicating anti-personnel mines. The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction has established itself as the norm in banning anti-personnel mines and the clearance of mined areas, with more than 140 States now adhering to the Convention. We will be gathering in Nairobi later this year to consolidate the achievements in banning this deadly weapon, and we will be planning the priorities for the next five years at the first Review Conference of the Convention. South Africa believes that the Review Conference should evaluate our achievements and recognize the challenges of the next five years. The need for us to intensify our efforts to mobilize resources to clear mined areas and assist those who have become victims of this lethal weapon is critical to our efforts to face these challenges.

South Africa therefore supports the adoption of an action plan that is realistic and achievable, and which would guide the implementation of the Ottawa Convention on Landmines until the second review conference. In this regard, the Common African Position on Anti-Personnel Landmines, presented here in New York at the African Union ministerial meeting last month, sends a powerful message on Africa's implementation priorities in the field of mine action and the banning of anti-personnel mines.

South Africa welcomes the constructive discussions that were held in the context of the experts meetings of the States parties to the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW). South Africa believes that progress has been made, especially on the issue of compliance. At the meeting of States parties to be held next month, a decision must be taken on how to take this issue forward. South Africa also welcomes the adoption of the additional Protocol to the CCW on explosive remnants of war and is in the process of preparing its instrument of consent to be bound by this Protocol so as to enable it to enter into force at an early date.

In conclusion, an agenda that could rapidly lead us to a world free of anti-personnel mines is in place, and progress has been achieved in dealing with the issue of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. The political will and the determination to address the issue of conventional weapons in a constructive manner should, therefore, be sustained.

Mr. Mine (Japan): The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their excessive accumulation is a particularly destabilizing factor in post-conflict situations, as it disrupts humanitarian aid operations and hinders rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts.

The Programme of Action adopted at the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, in July 2001, is a historic landmark, representing the collective will of the international community to address such problems. Japan intends to continue implementing the Programme of Action in cooperation with the international community.

Japan served as Chair at the first United Nations Biennial Meeting of States to consider the implementation of the Programme of Action. It was the first United Nations meeting to consider this matter, and the report of the meeting, with the Chairperson's summary annexed to it, was adopted by consensus, bringing the meeting to a successful conclusion. Japan hopes that all States will make efforts to reinforce their commitment to the Programme of Action and will take concrete steps to strengthen national, regional and global efforts to tackle the problem of small arms and light weapons in the lead-up to the second Biennial Meeting next year, as well as to the 2006 United Nations Review Conference.

Japan, for its part, has been actively contributing to the implementation of this Programme. In August 2004, my country, in cooperation with Australia and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, organized a seminar on the problems of small arms in the Pacific region. The seminar was entitled "Regional Seminar on Small Arms and Light Weapons for the South Pacific". Japan continues to make efforts in this sphere.

My country welcomed the convening last June of the first substantive session of the Open-ended Working Group on tracing and marking, and we sincerely invite all Member States to continue their active participation in its remaining sessions in order to ensure a positive outcome.

Japan also welcomes the broad-based consultations held by the Secretary-General with all Member States and with interested regional and subregional organizations to advance international cooperation in preventing, combating and eradicating illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons.

Nevertheless, in order to tackle the problems posed by small arms and light weapons in a comprehensive manner, we must focus not only on their supply but also on reducing the demand for such weapons in the long term. To deal with these problems, Japan has given its wholehearted support and has been a key provider of funds to the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) project. This was a research project conducted over the past two years on weapons-for-development projects in Albania, Cambodia and Mali. The UNIDIR project is an extremely useful tool in tackling the problem of demand for these arms, providing us with a follow-up evaluation of small arms and light weapons projects, which can be used to develop a framework for future donor projects.

Japan will spare no effort to help affected countries in this area of urgent priority.

The upcoming Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World will be a watershed event in the life of the Ottawa Convention. It will review the progress made since the entry into force of the Convention and will identify the remaining challenges we will have to address in years to come. In this light, I would like to emphasize that the crucial task of the Nairobi Summit is to promote universalization of the Convention and to facilitate mining action in the field.

It is important to note here that this year marks the mid-point in the decade ending in 2009, the first 10-year mine clearance deadline under Article 5 of the Convention. In this context, we would like to remind the Committee that things are happening in the field. Japan has actively directed its energy and resources towards mine action, including mine clearance, as shown in the cases of Cambodia and Afghanistan. Also, Japan has been actively engaged in the Nairobi Summit process and will continue to be so.

Mr. Verma (India): India remains deeply concerned that conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons, continue to pose a grave danger to the security of States. Their indiscriminate and irresponsible use, particularly by non-State actors, has caused enormous humanitarian concern. Such weapons have disrupted political stability and social harmony, derailed pluralism and democracy and hampered growth and development. They have also fuelled international terrorism and internal conflicts.

Multilateral diplomacy has achieved a modest measure of success in dealing with the threat posed by illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The adoption, by consensus, of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, in July 2001, reflected the commitment of the international community to deal with this issue. The Programme of Action outlines a realistic, achievable and comprehensive approach aimed at addressing the problem at the national, regional and global levels. India, however, was disappointed that the Conference that adopted the Programme of Action in July 2001 could not agree to adopt measures to prevent the sales of arms to non-State groups. This is an issue that the international community needs to address during the Biennial Meeting of States in 2005 and the first Review Conference in 2006. Those meetings will also provide an opportunity to review the effectiveness of the Programme of Action in achieving its objectives and to consider further measures to strengthen and promote its implementation.

India had the privilege of chairing the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms and Light Weapons. India also actively participates in the Open-ended Working Group, which is currently negotiating an international instrument to enable States to identify and trace in a timely and reliable manner illicit small arms and light weapons. We accord high priority to this exercise, and we are fully committed to it. India favours a legally binding instrument and the inclusion of ammunition and explosives within the scope of the instrument, if there is consensus on those proposals.

India will also pursue the objective of achieving a non-discriminatory, universal and global ban on anti-personnel mines that addresses the legitimate defence requirements of States. Landmines continue to play an important role in the defence of States that have long land borders with difficult and inhospitable terrains. The process of achieving the complete elimination of anti-personnel mines will be facilitated by the availability of militarily effective, non-lethal and cost-effective alternative technologies.

Multilateral processes, when reinforced by adequate political will on the part of key States, can achieve good results. We have achieved considerable success in dealing with the humanitarian concerns posed by indiscriminate use of landmines. Protocol II under the umbrella of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), dealing with landmines and booby traps, was amended in 1996 to make it more effective in reducing the danger posed by landmines. The scope of the Convention was extended in 2001 to cover internal conflicts. In 2003, another Protocol was added to the CCW to deal with the dangers posed to civilians by explosive remnants of war. This was a signal achievement on which we could build further under the CCW process. India is strongly committed to the CCW Convention and has ratified its four Protocols, including Amended Protocol II. The process of ratification of Protocol V on explosive remnants of war is under way.

India had the privilege of chairing the CCW process during 2002 and 2003, when the Working Group on Explosive Remnants of War was engaged in negotiations to conclude Protocol V on explosive remnants of war. A working group within the CCW Group of Governmental Experts continues to consider implementation of existing principles of international humanitarian law relevant to explosive remnants of war. It is also studying possible preventive measures aimed at improving the design of certain specific types of munitions, including submunitions, in order to minimize the humanitarian risk of those munitions becoming explosive remnants of war. Another working group, the Working Group on Mines Other Than Anti-Personnel Mines, has the responsibility to consider proposals with the aim of elaborating appropriate recommendations. The Indian delegation has made constructive contributions to the deliberations of those bodies. We hope that the forthcoming session of the Group of Governmental Experts in November 2004 will provide crucial momentum for both working groups.

We shall work for steady progress in the areas of small arms and light weapons and the CCW process. We hope the process will be extended to other areas of conventional disarmament, leading towards the goal of general and complete disarmament.

Mr. Lew Kwang-chul (Republic of Korea): The 2001 United Nations Programme of Action on small arms identified the tracing of illicit small arms and light weapons as a key mechanism for national, regional and international efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate those weapons. My delegation is pleased to note that the first session of the Open-ended Working Group on marking and tracing, held in June this year, took a promising first step under the able leadership of Ambassador Thalmann of Switzerland. It is particularly encouraging to note that the first session successfully identified key issues surrounding the three main areas of marking, record keeping and international cooperation.

The nature of the instrument is another key issue that should be resolved in the next round of negotiations. Despite the formidable tasks ahead of us, we are confident that the international community, in the spirit of cooperation and harmony, can achieve another successful outcome in the history of disarmament. As Ambassador Thalmann said in the informal consultations yesterday, now is the time to muster our collective wisdom.

The Republic of Korea participated actively and constructively in the discussions of the first session and stands ready to lend its continued support to future deliberations. At the same time, we also support the efforts of the international community to deal with the illicit brokering of small arms and light weapons.

The Republic of Korea has co-sponsored the draft resolution on the consolidation of peace through practical disarmament. Mine assistance and assistance on small arms control can be particularly useful tools to achieve the goal of practical disarmament.

This year, my Government, through the United Nations Development Programme, made a financial contribution of $100,000 to African countries to support mine action programmes, and it is considering further ways to contribute to easing the problems associated with small arms in Africa.

Finally, the Republic of Korea attaches great importance to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). Since joining the CCW in May 2001, the Republic of Korea has participated in various efforts to further develop the CCW regime. My delegation welcomes the adoption of Protocol V on explosive remnants of war. The entry into force of that Protocol will greatly contribute to lessening the serious humanitarian impact of explosive remnants of war.

Like last year, the Republic of Korea will co-sponsor the draft resolution on CCW tabled by the Swedish delegation.

Mr. Esenli (Turkey): Since this is the first time I am taking the floor, allow me, Sir, to express my warmest congratulations to you on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. I am confident that under your able leadership the First Committee will be successfully guided through its challenging agenda. I also assure you of my delegation's full cooperation throughout the proceedings.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement on conventional weapons made yesterday by the Ambassador of the Netherlands on behalf of the

European Union. We fully endorse the views and objectives expressed in the statement.

I also wish to avail myself of this opportunity to share some observations on specific aspects regarding the anti-personnel landmines. The international community has long endeavoured to take effective measures to prevent the use of anti-personnel landmines and rid ourselves of that scourge that causes widespread human suffering. The General Assembly resolutions calling on Member States to implement a moratorium on the export of anti-personnel landmines has constituted the basis of those efforts since 1993.

The Ottawa Convention, which entered into force in 1999, is a major achievement of the international community as it moves towards the total elimination of anti-personnel landmines. In that context, the participation of non-governmental organizations has been instrumental in finalizing and implementing the Convention. We sincerely hope that with the joint initiative of Turkey and Greece, which became States Parties to the Ottawa Convention simultaneously on 1 March this year, efforts aimed at demining our region in particular and the world in general will gain a new impetus and vigour.

Although enormous progress has been made, we believe that there are still considerable challenges ahead of us regarding the universalization and full implementation of the Convention. We therefore urge all States not parties to the Ottawa Convention to promote, support and advance the care, rehabilitation and social and economic reintegration of mine victims, the development of mine education programmes and the removal of anti-personnel mines planted in their territories, whenever they are in a position to do so.

My delegation is hopeful that the first Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention, to be held in Nairobi at the end of next month, will reinvigorate the international community with respect to universalization of the Convention and fulfilment by States parties of their treaty-related commitments.

In conclusion, since I have the floor, I would like to express my delegation's appreciation to the President-designate of the first Review Conference, Ambassador Petritsch of Austria, and his team for the draft documents they have prepared to facilitate our work in Nairobi.

I also wish to thank the delegation of Thailand for the draft resolution on the Ottawa Convention (A/C.1/59/L.40), which we are pleased to co-sponsor.

Mr. Grigore (Republic of Moldova): Since this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor, I join preceding speakers in sincerely congratulating you, Sir, on your election to serve as Chairman of the First Committee, and we extend our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau.

I would like to take this opportunity to address the question of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and to inform the Committee of the actions undertaken by the Government of the Republic of Moldova with respect to small arms and light weapons.

While the international community is trying to eliminate the threats posed by weapons of mass destruction, biological and chemical weapons, the problem of small arms and light weapons also occupies an important place on the agenda of international gatherings. Hundreds of thousands of people are killed and injured every year by such weapons. The stability and security of many countries and entire regions have been seriously impaired, and their prospects for development and prosperity have been severely reduced, and even denied, by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

The Moldovan Government is strongly committed to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and is undertaking all necessary efforts in this respect.

The Republic of Moldova is actively involved in efforts at the regional and subregional levels to establish mechanisms to prevent, combat, and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Moldova participates in various regional initiatives dealing with the issues of cross-border illicit trafficking and organized crime, including those created by Interpol, the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI), the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, The Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC), and the Central European Initiative. As a member of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Republic of Moldova is committed to implementing the OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons and participates in information exchange among member States. Moldova has adopted a number of norms and mechanisms to ensure the development of cooperative action to tackle cross-border crime in Southeastern Europe, in cooperation with the SECI Regional Center for Combating Transborder Crime.

From 4 to 5 March 2004, the Government of Moldova, in cooperation with the Governments of Switzerland and the Netherlands and the South Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC), hosted an international conference entitled "Countering Small Arms and Light Weapons Trafficking in the Black Sea Region — Improving Regional Standards". The meeting brought together experts from 24 countries, international organizations and non-governmental organizations to discuss a set of issues relating to small arms trafficking, including border security and border management, with a view to contributing to the enhancement of regional standards in the small arms and light weapons field. It focused on the need for enhanced border management and information exchange and for cooperation between law-enforcement bodies, at the national and regional levels.

The unresolved conflict in the eastern region of Moldova, which is controlled by a separatist regime, remains a serious threat to the political and economic stability of my country and to the security of the region as whole. The lack of control over the region and its borders strongly limits the Moldovan Government's ability to implement and enforce its commitments to restrain small arms and light weapons proliferation across the entire territory of Moldova.

This region remains an area of illegal production and trafficking in small arms. The separatist authorities are interested in perpetuating the illegal trade in weapons, as this provides a continual source of funding for them. Since 1993 it has become one of the most important factors in the economic and military policy of the separatist authorities. The Transdniestrian regime has industrial facilities for the production of light weapons, such as assault rifles, machine guns, multiple and mobile rocket launcher systems, mortars, anti-personnel mines and anti-personnel grenade launchers.

Given the "transparency" of the Transdniestrian section of the eastern border of Moldova, there are no guarantees that the illegally produced or trafficked armaments are not reaching other conflict zones. Furthermore, the small arms and light weapons trafficked from this region lack serial numbers, which makes them ideal for organized criminal networks. The Government of the Republic of Moldova stands firm in its position that the deployment of an international monitoring mission under the auspices of the OSCE and European Union along the border between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine will substantially contribute to the prevention and elimination of illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons and will help in identifying a solution to the problem in the eastern part of Moldova.

Another issue that I must raise is that of the huge arsenal of weapons stored in the eastern part of Moldova. In countries affected by similar conflicts, the presence of large stockpiles of weapons and ammunition is particularly dangerous, because of the risk of their being stolen for use by paramilitary groups or sold together with illegally produced armaments. The complete withdrawal of foreign arms and troops, as provided for in the decisions of the OSCE Istanbul Summit of 1999, has still not been achieved, and in 2004 that process has stopped. So far, only 20,000 tons of the 42,000 tons of existing ammunition have been removed from the region.

The Government of the Republic of Moldova would like to express its gratitude to the OSCE member States that have generously contributed over $20 million to the voluntary fund aimed at facilitating, among other things, the withdrawal or destruction of foreign arms, ammunition and equipment from Moldovan territory. We call for the active involvement of the OSCE and other interested organizations in the complete withdrawal of foreign troops and weapons, and in stabilization efforts in the region.

The Republic of Moldova supports a comprehensive approach to the problems of small arms and light weapons and would like to join with those who have emphasized the importance of international assistance and cooperation in order to make national, regional and global efforts aimed at curbing the proliferation of and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons successful.

Mr. Shlama (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The Republic of Belarus, sharing the concerns of the international community in connection with the humanitarian aspects of the problem of mines, fully supports the prohibition on the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines.

On 1 March 2004 the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction entered into force in our country. We have the world's seventh largest arsenal of such mines, which we inherited from the former Soviet Union. We do not produce, export or use anti-personnel landmines, neither in our country nor anywhere else in the world. Nevertheless, guided by common interests, we have ratified that Convention.

By a decree of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus of 6 May 2004, a national mechanism was established for implementing the Convention, which provides for informing the United Nations Secretary-General about transparency measures instituted within the time frame set in the Convention.

In compliance with the provisions of the Convention, our country must destroy its landmine stockpiles within four years. Belarus requires considerable financial and technological resources to ensure the elimination of more than four million anti-personnel mines. It should be noted, moreover, that conventional anti-personnel mines can be disposed of either through incineration or through open detonation. Such methods, however, because of ecological concerns, cannot be applied to mines with liquid explosives, and we have 3.6 million such mines. Under those circumstances, we appeal to Governments and international governmental and non-governmental organizations to assist the Republic of Belarus in its mine stockpile elimination efforts. We will be grateful for any and all kinds of technical, technological and financial assistance.

Belarus attaches special importance to developing cooperation with the United Nations, which is playing an important coordinating role in the sphere of anti-personnel mines. In March 2000, Belarus hosted a regional workshop on landmine issues. In August 2000, Belarus hosted a United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) assessment mission. Both the workshop participants and the members of the United Nations assessment mission came to the conclusion that there was a need to provide Belarus with international assistance in dealing with the destruction of anti-personnel mines.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction has become a powerful tool providing us with an opportunity to achieve the full elimination and full prohibition of anti-personnel mines, which have caused such enormous human sufferings on all continents. I hope that the developing practice and tradition of strict implementation of the Convention will help all of us to carry out our mission properly.

Underscoring the consistency of its policy in the sphere of international security and arms control, the Republic of Belarus has once again become a sponsor of the draft resolution entitled, "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction" (A/C.1/59/L.40).

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): If there are no other requests for the floor, we will now start the second segment of our meeting, which is a segment without records or recordings.

The formal portion of the meeting concluded at 12.35 p.m.

United Nations A/C.1/59/PV.14

General Assembly

Fifty-ninth session

Official Records

First Committee

14th meeting

Friday, 22 October 2004, 10 a.m.

New York

Chairman:: Mr. De Alba .... (Mexico)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda items 57 to 72 (*continued*)

Thematic discussion on item subjects and introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and international security items

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): This morning the Committee will continue its consideration of conventional weapons. We will hear a presentation of draft resolutions and decisions that were left pending yesterday.

I call on the representative of Bulgaria to introduce draft decision A/C.1/59/L.48.

Mr. Tafrov (Bulgaria) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of my delegation, I want to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Committee. My delegation will certainly be cooperating with you to help ensure that the Committee completes its work successfully.

(*spoke in French*)

First of all, I would like to bring to the attention of the delegations, draft decision A/C.1/59/L.48, "Problems resulting from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus". It is my honour to introduce the draft on behalf of France and the Netherlands and my own delegation. The decision comes under agenda item 65 of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, entitled "General and complete disarmament".

The draft decision is simply procedural in nature. It contains only one paragraph, which provides for the inclusion of the item in the agenda of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly.

It is the opinion of the sponsors that, in view of the serious problems resulting from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus, the question deserves consideration by the Committee in the future. Military conflicts throughout the world have, among other things, resulted in the accumulation of large numbers of conventional explosive munitions, which poses a serious risk to security in different parts of the world.

The accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles could also create environmental problems, and could have an impact on civilian populations. Some countries find it difficult to ensure safe conditions for their stockpiles. That means that the stockpiles are easily accessible and thus vulnerable to theft or plundering. Given the serious threat that such munitions could fall into the hands of terrorists or other criminal groups, the sponsors of the draft decision believe it is important that the international community become aware of the complex nature of the problem and of its different facets, and that there be a discussion of ways and means to resolve that problem.

We also believe that the issue requires specific practical measures. From that standpoint, the

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This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

instruments we have along with their regional mechanisms would be important in helping to find an appropriate response.

In December 2003, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) adopted a document on this same problem, which could perhaps be considered as a positive example in that regard.

The inclusion of the item in the agenda of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly would make it possible to better inform the international community of the different aspects of the problem and would lead to an exchange of views on the various possible solutions.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all the colleagues who made comments and proposals on our initiative during the informal consultations we carried out. May I also express the hope of the three sponsors — Bulgaria, France and the Netherlands — that our draft decision will be adopted by consensus. Representatives who would like complete information regarding our initiative will find all the information they need in the non-paper available in the conference room.

Mr. Sanders (Netherlands): France and the Netherlands are sponsors of draft decision A/C.1/59/L.48, and I wish to reaffirm that my delegation is fully committed to that important draft decision, which has just been explained by my colleague from Bulgaria. We certainly want to pursue the matter further during the meetings of the First Committee next year.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Nepal, who will introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.20.

Mr. Pant (Nepal): As has been the case with similar texts in the past, it is my privilege to introduce, on behalf of the sponsors and under agenda item 66 (e), draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.20, entitled "United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific".

I would also like to place on record our appreciation to the other sponsors for the kind support they have extended to my delegation in submitting the draft resolution. In keeping with the wish of the sponsors, this year's text has been amended only to the extent of reflecting the activities of the Centre carried out during the reporting period. The Secretary-General's report provided the necessary guidelines in that regard.

It is gratifying that the Centre has successfully organized important meetings and conferences, thereby contributing to fostering a climate of cooperation for peace and disarmament in the region. Indeed, the activities of the Centre in the Asia-Pacific region have led us to think long and hard about disarmament and confidence-building for lasting peace. However, the Centre has the potential to play a greater, more dynamic role in promoting arms control and disarmament activities at the regional and subregional levels, as envisaged in its mandate. Nepal is fully committed to hosting the Centre and to providing all necessary and reasonable support to it to enable it to function from the Nepali capital. We believe that the Centre must move to Kathmandu in order not to lose sight of its broader objectives of serving the largest region in the world.

In the course of this year, His Majesty's Government of Nepal undertook a number of consultations with the Department for Disarmament Affairs, including one at the level of Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, with a view to finalizing the host country agreement. We are optimistic that the Secretariat will soon come forward with an affirmative response in that respect. In the meantime, we would like to urge that the stalled Kathmandu process be revived as soon as possible.

The sponsors of the draft resolution are fully convinced of the significance of the Centre in addressing the security challenges facing the Asia-Pacific region. They believe that voluntary contributions will be forthcoming to assist the Centre in its future activities.

Finally, on behalf of the sponsors, my delegation would like to appeal to all member countries to adopt the draft resolution without a vote, as with similar texts in previous years.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Australia to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.49.

Mr. Shaw (Australia): On behalf of the sponsors — Argentina, Australia, Kenya, Thailand and Turkey — Australia is pleased to introduce to the First Committee draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.49, on the prevention of the illicit transfer and unauthorized access to and use of man-portable air-defence systems (MANPADS).

The draft resolution encourages Member States to take concrete steps to exercise effective control over MANPADS, including over their transfer and stockpile security, to prevent MANPADS from falling into the hands of non-State end-users. The draft resolution complements the First Committee's omnibus small-arms draft resolution and ties in with the Committee's goal to address contemporary security concerns.

Non-governmental research, including the *Small Arms Survey 2004*, highlights the serious security problem posed by inadequate State control over MANPADS stockpiles and raises concerns about the possession of MANPADS by non-State end-users. That study emphasizes that current international measures to control proliferation do not go far enough.

The draft resolution does not restrict or address authorized trade between Governments. The sponsors recognize that MANPADS are a legitimate defensive measure used by Governments. The draft resolution is a response to the increasing international concern about the potential use of those weapons by terrorist groups, and especially about the risk they pose to civil aviation. The potential loss of innocent lives and severe economic damage demand action in this forum. The draft resolution takes a practical approach. For example, it encourages initiatives to mobilize resources and technical expertise to assist States requesting assistance to enhance national controls and stockpile-management practices, or to remove surplus stocks.

The sponsors are grateful for the many useful comments and suggestions they received on the draft resolution. The text has been adjusted to take into account many of the views provided during our informal consultations. The sponsors urge all delegations to support this important draft resolution.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Mali to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.21/Rev.1.

Mr. Kone (Mali) (*spoke in French*): It is an honour for my delegation to introduce to the First Committee the draft resolution entitled "Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them" (A/C.1/59/L.21/Rev.1) on behalf of the 15 States members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS): Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, the Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. This draft resolution addresses a major disarmament concern of our subregion — and therefore of the whole of Africa.

The draft resolution before the Committee for adoption is an updated version of resolution 58/58, adopted by consensus at the fifty-eighth session. As noted in the preambular part, the submission of this draft resolution arose from the collective awareness in our subregion of the danger posed by small arms to the security of our peoples and the development and stability of our States. Initiatives taken by West Africa, by the African continent and by the United Nations eloquently attest to the great need to better deal with the problem of small arms. The attainment of this goal requires a greater mobilization of States in order to strengthen cooperation to control this phenomenon. In this respect, the Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons remains a key proof of the commitment of African States.

The operative part of the resolution welcomes the declaration of a moratorium in this regard and continues to encourage the ECOWAS States to establish national commissions. It calls upon civil society organizations to take an active part in combating small arms and light weapons.

The draft resolution virtually repeats, in form and substance, last year's resolution. It has not undergone any major changes. However, I would draw attention to some new material. First, the new first preambular paragraph recalls the resolution adopted at the previous session. Secondly, the new final preambular paragraph is an update reflecting the new Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons established through General Assembly resolution 58/241. Thirdly, operative paragraph 2 has been somewhat modified. And finally, the final two operative paragraphs make reference to the sixtieth session.

When the General Assembly decided, through its resolution 58/241, to establish the Open-ended Working Group on marking and tracing small arms and light weapons, it recognized the magnitude and the complexity of this issue. The Secretary-General also recognized in his report (A/59/181) the priority task of preventing and combating the trade in small arms and light weapons through assistance provided to States and through strengthening their capacities regarding the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The ECOWAS member States accordingly urge the international community to support their efforts to stem the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons.

My delegation, on behalf of the States members of ECOWAS, would like to pay tribute to the spirit of good cooperation demonstrated by the Secretariat and to thank the Department for Disarmament Affairs in particular for its tireless efforts. Allow me to also thank the countries that have always supported this draft resolution. We would like to thank in advance all the delegations that will join us in ensuring that this draft resolution is adopted by consensus by our Committee.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Colombia to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.43.

Mr. Rivas (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour and a pleasure for my delegation to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.43, entitled "The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects". I do so on behalf of Japan, South Africa and the 27 other delegations whose names appear on the document. As of the day before yesterday, they were joined by the delegations of Andorra, Algeria, Australia, Belize, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Congo, Djibouti, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka and Venezuela.

Among its other provisions, this draft resolution, like resolutions 56/24 V, 57/72 and 58/241, emphasizes the importance of early and full implementation of the Programme of Action adopted by the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. It welcomes the efforts by Member States to submit, on a voluntary basis, national reports on their implementation of the Programme of Action.

As members are aware, this draft resolution builds upon resolution 58/241 of 23 December 2003, which was coordinated by South Africa and which decided the following: first, to convene a United Nations conference to review progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms in New York for a period of two weeks between June and July 2006; secondly, that a session of the preparatory committee for the conference is to be held in New York for a period of two weeks in January 2006 and that, if necessary, a subsequent session may be held; and thirdly, to convene in 2005 the second biennial meeting of States to consider the national, regional and global implementation of the Programme of Action.

Building on this basis, draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.43 sets the dates for each of these events as follows. The 2006 United Nations conference to review progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action will be held in New York for a period of two weeks between 26 June and 7 July 2006. The preparatory committee for the 2006 conference will hold a two-week session in New York from 9 to 20 January 2006 and, if necessary, a subsequent session of up to two weeks. The second biennial meeting of States to consider the national, regional and global implementation of the Programme of Action will be held in New York from 11 to 15 July 2005.

As a result of the sixth preambular paragraph of resolution 58/241, which notes with satisfaction the regional efforts being undertaken in support of the implementation of the 2001 Programme of Action, draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.43 contains a fourth preambular paragraph which notes with satisfaction subregional efforts and commends the progress that has already been made in this regard. Operative paragraph 6 then reaffirms the importance of those regional and subregional efforts.

With regard to the Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.43, in its sixth preambular paragraph, welcomes its establishment and the convening of its first substantive session in New York from 14 to 25 June 2004. In operative paragraph 4, the draft resolution also expresses appreciation for the efforts undertaken by the Chair of the Group, encourages the continued active participation of delegations in the remaining sessions and stresses the importance of making every effort to ensure that a positive outcome is achieved by the Group.

As members may recall, in section IV, paragraph 1 (d), of the 2001 Programme of Action (see A/CONF.192/15), the States participating in the Conference recommended that the General Assembly "consider further steps to enhance international cooperation in preventing, combating and eradicating illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons".

Resolution 58/241, adopted last year, addressed this important subject for the first time and requested the Secretary-General to hold consultations on further steps to enhance international cooperation in preventing, combating and eradicating illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons. In his report this year (A/59/181), the Secretary-General describes the outcome of those consultations. Draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.43 welcomes the consultations in its seventh preambular paragraph and requests their continuation in operative paragraph 5. As members are aware, the informal consultations on the final content of that paragraph continue. That is why, at the end of operative paragraph 5, the words "to be further discussed" appear in square brackets.

As one can see, draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.43 — like the resolutions adopted under this item in 2001, 2002 and 2003 — is action-oriented, with the objective of carrying out an effective follow-up of the 2001 Conference and implementing the Programme of Action. In essence, it is a procedural text that makes operative the agreements reached by consensus at the 2001 Conference. It thus sets the priorities of the international agenda concerning the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons through 2006.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Pakistan to introduce draft resolutions A/C.1/59/L.47 and A/C.1/59/L.46.

Mr. Hashmi (Pakistan): I have requested the floor to introduce two draft resolutions, contained in documents A/C.1/59/L.47 and A/C.1/59/L.46.

First, on behalf of the delegations of Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Nepal, Peru, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Turkey and my own delegation, I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/59/L.47, entitled "Regional disarmament".

Efforts aimed at international security and disarmament need to be pursued at both the regional and international levels. Although international disarmament measures are vital, in most instances security and disarmament can be promoted most effectively at the regional level. As draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.47 notes, guidelines and recommendations for regional approaches to disarmament within the context of global security were adopted by the Disarmament Commission in 1993. Those guidelines remain relevant to the promotion of regional disarmament in the conventional and non-conventional fields.

It is now quite evident that, in most areas of tension and potential conflict, the regional approach could offer the most effective basis for promoting disarmament and enhancing security. The draft resolution notes the recent proposals for disarmament at the regional and subregional levels and expresses the conviction that endeavours to promote regional disarmament, taking into account the specific characteristics of each region and in accordance with the principle of undiminished security at the lowest level of armaments, would enhance the security of all States.

The draft resolution therefore stresses the need for sustained efforts, affirms that regional approaches to disarmament complement each other and calls upon States to conclude agreements wherever possible. It also welcomes the initiatives towards disarmament, non-proliferation and security undertaken by some countries at the regional and subregional levels and encourages confidence-building measures.

Adoption of this draft resolution will encourage concerned countries to pursue endeavours for regional disarmament and will help to strengthen regional and international security. The sponsors — including my delegation — hope that, as was the case with a similar text last year, draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.47, on regional disarmament, will be adopted without a vote.

I would now like briefly to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/59/L.46, entitled "Conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels", on behalf of the delegations of Bangladesh, Belarus, Germany, Nepal, Peru, Spain, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine and my own delegation.

The draft resolution aims to promote disarmament endeavours in an area that so far has not received due recognition in international disarmament forums: the pursuit of conventional disarmament at the regional and subregional levels. Draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.46 outlines in its preambular part several vital principles and precepts relating to the issue. These include the crucial role of arms control in peace and security, that threats to peace in the post-cold-war era arise mainly among States located in the same region or subregion, that the preservation of a balance in the defence capabilities of States at the lowest level of armaments would contribute to peace and stability, that agreements to strengthen regional peace and security at the lowest possible level of armaments and military forces is a desirable objective, that militarily significant States and States with larger military capabilities have a special responsibility in promoting such agreements for regional peace and security, and that an important objective should be to prevent the possibility of military attack launched by surprise and to avoid aggression.

The preambular part of draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.46 also notes with particular interest the initiatives taken in various regions, including among a number of Latin American countries, and the proposals for conventional arms control in South Asia, and recognizes the relevance and value of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, which is described as a cornerstone of European security.

The operative part of the draft resolution, while deciding to give urgent consideration to the issue of conventional disarmament at the regional and subregional levels, requests the Conference on Disarmament to consider formulating principles that can serve as a framework for regional agreements. It also requests the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States and to submit a report to the General Assembly at its next session.

The sponsors express the hope that this draft resolution will be adopted without any objection.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I call now on the representative of Sweden, who will introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.54.

Ms. Borsiin Bonnier (Sweden): I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.54, on the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW). I do so on behalf of approximately 60 countries; for the sake of brevity, I will refrain from reading out their names. My delegation is very grateful to all the sponsoring countries for their support, and we hope that many more countries will join us in the coming week — as a few did just a few minutes ago.

It was a great achievement that the Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention was able to adopt the Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War, Protocol V, by consensus in November 2003. We warmly welcome this new legally binding instrument. We call upon all States parties to adhere to it as soon as possible so that it can enter into force. The new Protocol will make a significant contribution towards minimizing the humanitarian consequences caused by explosive remnants of war.

We would also like to express well-deserved support for the ongoing work of the Chairman-designate and the two coordinators. We encourage the Group of Governmental Experts to consider all proposals on mines other than anti-personnel mines put forward since its establishment, with the aim of elaborating appropriate recommendations at the meeting in November. We also encourage the Chairman-designate and the Group to report on the work done on compliance, as well as on the implementation of existing principles of international humanitarian law and on possible preventive measures aimed at improving the design of certain specific types of munitions, including sub-munitions.

Let me finally call upon all States that have not yet done so to become parties to the Convention and its Protocols and to adhere to its provisions, including the important amendment to extend the scope to include armed conflicts of a non-international character.

I hope that the draft resolution, like similar texts in previous years, will be adopted without a vote.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Thailand to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.40/Rev.1.

Mrs. Laohaphan (Thailand): It is an honour for my delegation to introduce, on behalf of 120 countries, the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/59/L.40/Rev.1, entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction". In this regard, we wish to thank each and every delegation that helped us to arrive at the present text. The sponsors whose names do not appear on the draft resolution will be reflected at a later stage in the document to be issued by the Secretariat.

Draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.40/Rev.1 is based mainly on General Assembly resolution 58/53 of 8 December 2003; it has been updated to reflect developments since the Fifth Meeting of States Parties, held last year in Bangkok. In the light of our current efforts to reform the First Committee's work, particularly in accordance with paragraph 6 of section B of the annex to resolution 58/126, entitled "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly", which calls for more concise, focused and action-oriented resolutions, we have merged last year's sixth to tenth preambular paragraphs into one single paragraph, which appears as the sixth preambular paragraph in this draft resolution. We thank the host countries of all the past Meetings of States Parties for agreeing to this merged paragraph.

We have also included new elements to reflect developments over the past year. In the preambular part, we recall the preparatory process for the First Review Conference, which will be held in Nairobi from 29 November to 3 December 2004, in recognition of the tremendous work carried out under the guidance of Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch of Austria, President-designate of the First Review Conference. We also welcome the regional seminars that have been held in different parts of the world over the past year, in Kenya, Burkina Faso, Ecuador, Lithuania, Romania, Tajikistan and Thailand, to name a few. The seminars were not limited to States Parties to the Convention, but they also had the participation of numerous States not parties to the Convention and were of practical use in exchange of information, experiences and best practices in mine action. They also served as a solid groundwork for the First Review Conference.

Another new element in the preambular part is the increased recognition of the need to integrate mine action into international and national development programmes and strategies. In that regard, we welcome the developments that have taken place since the Fifth Meeting of States Parties, including the 20 September 2004 meeting between the Foreign Minister of Thailand, as President of the Fifth Meeting, and the President of the World Bank, which contributed to a possible partnership between the mine action community and the World Bank. We thank, among others, Canada, Japan, Norway, Cambodia, Mozambique, Afghanistan, Switzerland, the United Nations Development Programme, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines for their active role in this regard.

One last new element in the preambular part of the draft resolution is an update on the number of States parties to the Convention, which now stands at 143 countries; we hope that more will be joining in the near future.

As the First Review Conference is approaching, in the operative part of the draft resolution we encourage all interested States, United Nations agencies, other relevant organizations and institutions, regional organizations, the ICRC and relevant non-governmental organizations to attend the First Review Conference at the highest possible level and to maintain a high level of participation in the subsequent Meetings of States Parties and their inter-sessional work programme. We also request the Secretary-General to undertake preparations necessary to convene the next Meeting of States Parties.

We hope that draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.40/Rev.1 will enjoy wide support, as a similar text did last year. We are grateful to all the sponsors, and we encourage those countries that have not yet joined the Convention but that share its humanitarian objectives to also consider sponsoring and supporting the draft resolution.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Germany, who will introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.38.

Mr. Wolter (Germany): On behalf of the sponsors, I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures", contained in document A/C.1/59/L.38.

In addition to the 79 sponsors already listed in document A/C.1/59/L.38, a further 19 countries so far have joined in sponsoring the draft resolution. I should like to express our appreciation and thanks to all those countries, and especially to Angola, Benin, El Salvador, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, the

Philippines, Serbia and Montenegro, Singapore, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste and Uganda, which have joined the group of sponsors for the first time this year. Furthermore, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all other countries that will sign up for sponsorship in the coming days. Again, this sponsorship bridges the usual regional group lines and involves Member States of virtually all regions of the globe in the noble endeavour to consolidate peace through practical disarmament measures.

Practical disarmament measures are still a relatively new item on the United Nations agenda. The international community is aware, more now than ever before, of the importance of such measures, especially with regard to the excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons, which pose a threat to peace and security and reduce the prospects for economic development in many regions, particularly in post-conflict situations.

A shining example of the success of practical disarmament is the Albania project, initiated by the Group of Interested States, and which has led to the collection and destruction of more than 100,000 small arms in that region. We will build on best practices to enhance the capacities of the international community to replicate these successes.

A comprehensive and integrated approach to practical disarmament measures is key to maintaining and consolidating peace and security and thus provides a basis for effective post-conflict peace-building. Practical disarmament measures as part of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes will complement and strengthen United Nations peacekeeping and peace-building efforts. This year's draft resolution contains a new operative paragraph to emphasize the importance of including in United Nations-mandated peacekeeping missions practical disarmament measures aimed at addressing the problem of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in conjunction with disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. This will contribute to an integrated and effective management strategy as part of a sustainable peace-building process.

Furthermore, the draft resolution for the first time welcomes the synergies within the multi-stakeholder process, including Governments, the United Nations system, regional and subregional organizations and institutions as well as non-governmental organizations, in support of practical disarmament measures and the Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons in particular, inter alia through the Coordinating Action on Small Arms within the Department for Disarmament Affairs.

Germany is honoured by the confidence placed in it by so many sponsors. We will do our utmost to promote the implementation of practical disarmament measures within the Group of Interested States. At its most recent meeting, on 1 October, the Group — with an unprecedented attendance of nearly 100 delegations and United Nations representatives — initiated a number of regional projects, with the Arab League, for instance, and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), as well as in Central Africa. For the upcoming meeting in December, we will include projects in Latin America in cooperation with the United Nations Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Lima, together with civil society.

Finally, active involvement in the work of the Group can be a good way to demonstrate continued support for practical disarmament and to show that the United Nations and its Member States can make a difference on the ground to help achieve a safer world. Germany is confident that the international community has the courage, energy and perseverance to take on the challenges of practical disarmament in conflict-ridden regions where the need for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and practical disarmament measures are as urgent as ever.

As in previous years, we have sought to produce a draft resolution that will again be adopted without a vote. We invite all delegations to join this consensus.

Mr. Yao (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): I am taking the floor not to introduce a draft resolution but to express Côte d'Ivoire's views on conventional weapons. I would beg your indulgence in that respect, Mr. Chairman.

For reasons of diplomatic convenience, conventional weapons do not receive the kind of attention given to weapons of mass destruction, inter alia nuclear weapons, to which we, the peoples of the United Nations, have given a high priority. Current dire circumstances have caused attention to be focused on conventional weapons, yet such attention is not nearly commensurate with the magnitude of their destructive potential.

Weapons of mass destruction pose the threat of tremendous devastation, but conventional weapons have gone beyond the level of a mere threat; they sow destruction every day, every minute, every second. Indeed, since the beginning of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, conventional arms have killed thousands of people the world over and shattered millions of families. They have permanently mutilated the bodies of hundreds of millions of human beings and inflicted long-term trauma on the psyches of many millions of others. They have forced millions of people into exile and endless international migration and into overcrowded, makeshift refugee camps. They have had irreversible effects on the social organization of many tribes that have had negative impacts on the States concerned. They have caused and continue to cause terrible social and sociological tragedies. They are truly also weapons of mass destruction, as the representative of Sierra Leone so aptly put it in his important statement. Clearly, we must pay them at least as much attention as we do to what are, by convention, called weapons of mass destruction.

The Republic of Côte d'Ivoire has for more than a decade now experienced the painful consequences of the many conflicts affecting West Africa. Fortunately, these crises are currently in the process of settlement, thanks to the generous and persistent support of the international community, to which my delegation once again expresses its appreciation.

Côte d'Ivoire, aware of the seriousness of the consequences of the illicit production, stockpiling, import, export and transfer of conventional weapons, is a party to all international instruments aimed at the control and monitoring, at the State level, of the full life-cycle of these weapons. We therefore welcome the growing success of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

We welcome also the increase in the number of ratifications of the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines, the inclusion of Man-Portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADS) in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and the adoption last year of Protocol V to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

Nonetheless, the war and its consequences have compelled Côte d'Ivoire to consider three realities. The first is that adherence by our States to those instruments is not yet universal. Secondly, the implementation, at the national and regional level, of international control and monitoring agreements on conventional weapons is not at the level of adherence. And thirdly, agreements that are termed "politically binding" are clearly insufficient. That is why my delegation appeals once again to those States that are hesitant to participate in certain conventional arms control instruments and to take measures to hasten the universalization of those instruments and the contribution of our States to the Register of Conventional Arms.

The recent terrible experience of Côte d'Ivoire has prompted my delegation to advocate the transformation of our politically binding agreements into legally binding agreements under United Nations control. That is why we support the proposal to negotiate a legally binding international instrument on the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons, munitions and associated explosives. We welcome the efforts of Ambassador Thalmann and assure him of our full support.

Lastly, among other subjects of concern to my delegation, we would mention the humanitarian, economic and environmental damage caused by mines other than anti-personnel mines. My delegation supports the work of the Coordinator in this field and assures him of its full readiness to cooperate. It is in that context that Côte d'Ivoire is co-sponsoring most draft resolutions relating to disarmament.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): We shall now begin consideration of the next thematic segment, in which we will hear statements on regional disarmament, confidence-building measures, other disarmament measures and disarmament machinery.

Mr. Vasiliev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We have asked for the floor to make a short statement under the thematic segment on regional security. Two draft resolutions have already been submitted under this item: draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.8, on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East, and draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.37, on the risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East.

Russia is seriously concerned at the disturbing developments in the Middle East. The continuing increase in tension in the region does serious damage to all parties to the conflict and to the efforts to find a settlement to the Middle East question.

We believe that a comprehensive approach must be adopted to ensure stability in that region. In that context, we support the proposal to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East. We also believe that implementation of that proposal would help ensure the universalization of the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and promote Israel's accession to the Treaty.

Overall, we think it is necessary for the international community to take more robust action to prevent a worst-case scenario and to take practical steps to promote the process of a peaceful settlement. We believe that the road map of the Quartet of international mediators, which has been endorsed by all parties, needs to be implemented immediately.

Mr. Al-Busaidi (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me first to convey to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the other members of the Bureau our congratulations on your election. We are certain that your diplomatic and negotiating skills will ensure the success of our work and will help us achieve consensus. My delegation stands ready to cooperate with you and with all other delegations to attain that goal. I also take this opportunity to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, for his valuable statement before the First Committee, which covered a number of issues that merit the Committee's attention and consideration.

My delegation has taken the floor on the theme of regional disarmament. There is no doubt that there is a close link between regional disarmament and international peace and security; the two are complementary. Here, Oman does not hide its concern at the critical security situation in the Middle East.

In the light of the circumstances, we wish to state that our country will not slacken in its sincere efforts to create a climate of security and stability in the region. That is clearly reflected in our Government's having acceded to all major international conventions relating to disarmament — the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty — and in all the other initiatives that have been and will be taken by my country in this area.

However, we would like to voice our concern that one single State in the region, Israel, remains outside the sphere of our regional collective security. Israel remains outside the non-proliferation regime, which is a basis for international peace and security. That situation is abnormal, and, unless it is dealt with responsibly and seriously, it will continue to pose a threat to international peace and security.

As can be seen, the Arab States have repeatedly proposed initiatives, most importantly calling for making the Middle East a zone free of weapons of mass destruction. The Arab States are convinced of the seriousness and fragility of the security situation in the region. Accordingly, we have submitted to the Committee draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.37, which calls on the international community to exert pressure on Israel to accede to the NPT and to submit all its nuclear facilities to comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards, like most other countries in the world.

Unfortunately, all such efforts have been in vain. What is worse, some States even avoid mentioning Israel in the First Committee. That is disturbing, and we are surprised to see it happen, as it does not make possible an accurate and responsible consideration of the purposes and principles of the Organization or the provisions of the NPT. As well, it runs counter to the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 1995 NPT Review Conference.

Our interpretation of the outcome of the 1995 Review Conference as it relates to the Middle East is a clear one, based on the unlimited extension of the Treaty being contingent on progress in making the Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction. Countries that have not acceded to the NPT should review their position. Because Israel remains outside the NPT regime, it poses a threat to regional and international peace and security.

In conclusion, I would like to cite Mr. Abe's statement earlier in this session, in which he said that adopting draft resolutions should not be an end in itself. The proliferation of draft resolutions is pointless if they are not implemented.

Mr. Altunaiji (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of my country, I would like to make a statement on the item on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East.

The Middle East is one of the major regions of tension not only because of Israel's continued occupation of Arab and Palestinian territories and its refusal to abide by the relevant United Nations resolutions on the Arab-Israeli conflict, but also because of its insistence on maintaining a highly advanced arsenal of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons and their delivery systems. That is a source of grave danger and concern with respect not only to the security and stability of neighbouring States and peoples, but also to that of the region and the world as a whole.

The United Arab Emirates strongly condemns Israel's nuclear-weapon development policy and reiterates its appeal to the international community to take all necessary measures to put pressure on the Israeli Government to implement the requirements set out in the relevant United Nations resolutions, particularly those of the Security Council and the General Assembly, which call for it to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, as all the other States of the region have done. It should submit its entire nuclear arsenal and all of its fissile materials to the safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), in accordance with the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 NPT Review Conference. That resolution also stressed the universality of the Treaty. In this connection, we would like to highlight a number of issues.

First, Israel must cooperate with the IAEA by declaring all of its nuclear facilities and submitting them to Agency safeguards. We also call upon Israel to immediately desist from stockpiling any fissile materials or other materials that can be used in the manufacture of weapons of mass destruction. It should immediately cease all nuclear testing and dismantle all of its nuclear programmes. All States, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, should abide by their obligations, as set out in the relevant international resolutions, to halt all technical, financial and scientific support and assistance leading to the further updating and modernizing of weapons of mass destruction.

Current international conditions require strenuous efforts aimed at the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons. If that is achieved, it will contribute greatly to alleviating tension and instability in the region. It will pave the way for renewing dialogue and returning to peace negotiations, with a view to arriving at a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine and the Middle East. That would in turn enhance the stability and peace of all of our peoples and of the region as a whole.

Mr. Lew (Republic of Korea): In the view of my delegation, in addressing specific regional concerns in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, a tailored approach can be effective, as it reflects specific regional considerations and interests. In that regard, we agree that the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific plays an important role in fostering an environment of cooperation and understanding among countries in the region. In particular, the Republic of Korea supports the role of the Asia-Pacific Regional Centre as a useful vehicle for the promotion of dialogue and regional security and disarmament issues. We will continue to extend our political and financial support to the Regional Centre in order to strengthen its role and activities.

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to state that the Republic of Korea, in collaboration with the Asia-Pacific Centre, will host an international disarmament conference, in Cheju island, from 6 to 8 December this year, for the third consecutive year since 2002. The meeting, based on the theme of how to address challenges in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, will discuss such topical issues as the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, missiles and the 2005 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Mr. Shlesma (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Conventional arms control has lost none of its relevance. On the contrary, it is increasing in importance at the regional and subregional levels. The proliferation of conventional weapons in a given region and the absence of effective control and verification mechanisms in and of themselves pose a threat to international peace and stability. The growth of tension in a region, together with the uncontrolled transfer of arms and military technologies, can lead to armed conflict, which can spread to other regions.

The Republic of Belarus believes that confidence-building measures constitute a key element of conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels. The main objective of confidence-building measures in the area of conventional arms control is to strengthen regional security as an active component of international security and to reduce the risk of armed conflict. The development of confidence-building measures can help to reduce misunderstanding and the danger inherent in failing to properly assess military activities. Such measures can prevent military confrontation and reduce the risk of a sudden attack or outbreak of war as a result of a military incident by creating a regional climate in which the importance of the military element is consistently reduced. Confidence-building measures can promote a balanced arms reduction and disarmament process and provide for the more effective functioning of a verification regime.

We welcome the conclusion by certain countries of appropriate bilateral and multilateral confidence-building agreements in the military and political areas, and we call upon other States to support initiatives to reach such agreements on confidence-building measures in the area of regional and subregional conventional arms control. In the creation and subsequent development of confidence-building measures in the military and political area, we believe that the best approach would be one that allowed for flexibility in attaining common interests in the area of security and arms control in the region concerned.

In this process, guarantees must be provided with regard to the inalienable right of States to an adequate level of security, on the understanding that no State or group of States parties to any agreement on confidence-building measures should seek to gain an advantage over another party at any stage of the implementation and development of such an agreement.

One outcome of our active cooperation with neighbouring States is the formation of a zone of good-neighbourly relations and security in the border regions of Belarus. Agreements for supplementary confidence-building measures were also concluded in 2004 with Latvia and Poland. We view those agreements as a major contribution to the strengthening of regional and common European security system.

I would like once again to highlight the important role played by the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty), which is a key element of European security policy. The Republic of Belarus participated actively in the negotiating process to adapt that Treaty to the new geopolitical conditions in Europe and was one of the first States to ratify the Treaty Adaptation Agreement in 2000. The adapted Treaty symbolizes a shift away from the old relations that prevailed in Europe during the cold war, which were characterized by bloc confrontation, to a new relationship, based on cooperation and trust. The Adaptation Agreement has also made it possible to open the door to accession by new States.

The Republic of Belarus is in favour of the speedy entry into force of the adapted CFE Treaty and of accession to it by new members. We believe that that would make it possible to conclude the process of creating a new European security architecture with a view to increasing the strength and transparency of arms control in Europe. It would also set a good example for States in other areas of the world.

In that connection, we urge other States parties to the CFE Treaty that have not yet ratified the Adaptation Agreement to do so as soon as possible. We also support the idea of considering, at the Conference on Disarmament, the question of developing principles that could serve as a basis for regional agreements on conventional arms control.

We stress the consistency of our policy in the area of international security and arms control. Because of this, the Republic of Belarus, as with similar texts in the past, has become a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.46, entitled "Conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels".

Mr. Castellón Duarte (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to express my delegation's utmost support for the work being done by the United Nations Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean and to its Director, Mr. Périclès Gasparini, for the enormous progress achieved, inter alia, in training, information, documentation, equipment and workshops, to help the countries of the region in meeting their goals of peace and development.

Among other activities, the Centre has supported measures taken by the Central American countries for the implementation of the Central American Project for the Control of Illicit Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons, endorsed on 19 December 2003 by the leaders of the subregion at the Central American Integration System Summit, held in Belize. Among the objectives of the Central American project is to move forward in harmonizing our legislation in this area, in accordance with existing regional concepts, and to build consensus among States and an awareness of the need to strengthen international controls on transfers of small arms and light weapons, in preparation for the next United Nations review conference on small arms and light weapons, to be held in 2006.

In this context, we greatly appreciate the United Kingdom initiative to move towards stricter control of transfers of small arms and light weapons. This is completely consistent with our regional strategy to prevent and combat arms trafficking, on the basis of the United Nations Programme of Action. The United Kingdom and the Government of Nicaragua, the headquarters country of the Central American Project, have joined efforts, and in Managua, on 7 and 8 October 2004, held a Central American workshop on transit, import and export controls on small arms and light weapons. The workshop set important guidelines for continued work by the Central American countries at the national, regional and global levels. Included were the urgent need for our Governments to achieve consensus in the establishment of simple, transparent and effective joint control mechanisms for arms transfers, and the identification of regional priorities in training, technical assistance and financing for project implementation, based on the diverse needs of the region.

We reaffirmed that multilateral cooperation, based on the principles of shared responsibility, is essential to confront the problems before us. Central American countries reached consensus regarding regional mechanisms for harmonizing views and action in order to formulate a legal approach to controlling the import, export and transit of small arms and light weapons.

We concluded that we need to make much more progress in adapting internal legislation to the provisions of international instruments to which we have acceded, and to make progress in harmonizing, at the regional level, our national laws so that we will have a coherent, modern legislative basis on which to improve controls and to confront the consequences of the production and illicit traffic in firearms and other weapons.

All those results were achieved thanks to the good will and determination of the many institutions, public officials and citizens who understand the importance of complete information and open, transparent discussion of existing problems in order to achieve the controls needed to prevent and eliminate the illicit trade in weapons.

It is hard to believe that the workshop could have obtained all the information it needed without the cooperation and resolve of the Central American countries, which are concerned about achieving the goal of a Central America that is safe, at peace and fully developed — or without all the countries that have supported us in one way or another, without the United Kingdom and Sweden, without the representatives of international organizations, and without technical assistance from the United Nations Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. On the basis of the United Nations Programme of Action, all of those partners are fulfilling their mandate to fostering development in the region by helping us strengthen our institutions.

We acknowledge that the research presented by non-governmental organizations and independent experts will be very useful to the region. It shows the enormous impact of the firearms that circulate in our societies.

Mr. Sanders (Netherlands): I am speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU) on the cluster 6, on confidence-building measures. The candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Croatia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro and the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

The EU strongly supports the establishment of confidence- and security-building measures as an instrument to create transparency and, hence, to overcome mistrust, misunderstandings and miscalculations, especially in situations and areas of tension. European countries have highly benefited from the confidence-building measures and confidence- and security-building measures that were introduced in Europe, in particular through the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe/Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe process. In other regions of the world, confidence-building measures have played and can in future play an important role, especially in areas of tension and in all phases of a crisis or conflict, including the post-conflict phase. The EU is interested in closer cooperation with other regions in this field.

The diversity in confidence-building measures and confidence- and security-building measures is extensive. EU member States actively participate in transparency measures in the various multilateral forums, as well as in several verification mechanisms.

At the global level, in the United Nations several very useful confidence-building measures, such as the Register of Conventional Arms, the United Nations System for the Standardized Reporting of Military Expenditures and the database on legislation concerning arms transfers, are in place. All those instruments have proven to increase confidence between States.

Mr. Mavroyiannis (Cyprus): As this is the first time my delegation is taking the floor, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on the able manner in which you have conducted the chairmanship of the First Committee thus far and to assure you of our full support and cooperation in steering the remainder of the work of the Committee.

The Dutch presidency of the European Union has already delivered a statement on confidence-building measures. I would like to take this opportunity, however, to call attention to certain developments which are of particular importance to my delegation, with regard to initiatives of my Government over the past year in the field of confidence-building.

In the year since its ratification of the Ottawa Convention on Landmines, the Republic of Cyprus has proceeded to implement its commitments under the Convention. In December 2003 alone, 4,000 stockpiled anti-personnel mines were destroyed in accordance with the provisions of the Ottawa Convention. Our endeavour to fully comply with the Ottawa Convention is not the sole driving force behind those actions by my Government. As a matter of principle and priority, our aim is to avail ourselves of the broader horizons that the Convention opens up in the direction of further promoting confidence-building measures, despite the continuing occupation of a significant part of Cyprus's territory.

Utilizing the extensive possibilities offered by ongoing developments, and with a view to defusing the situation on the ground and minimizing its potentially explosive character, the Government of Cyprus has proceeded with the extension of the — so far — unilateral demining process it initiated exactly one year ago. Furthermore, and in the context of confidence-building, we have recently proposed the withdrawal of military forces from sensitive areas and the abstention from military exercises in those areas.

The Republic of Cyprus has also put forward a proposal to the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) for clearing all minefields within the United Nations Buffer Zone — both those of the National Guard of the Republic of Cyprus and those of the Turkish forces. While a positive response from the other side is still pending, the Government of Cyprus has indicated its willingness to proceed unilaterally with the clearing of National Guard minefields within the Buffer Zone, in cooperation with UNFICYP. To that end, the United Nations Mine Action Service has already conducted an on-site investigation of the minefields within the Buffer Zone and has prepared a technical mission report outlining the practical steps required for the actual demining process. Moreover, and in accordance with an agreement concluded between the Government of Cyprus and UNFICYP last June, UNFICYP has begun setting up the necessary infrastructure for the implementation of the aforementioned project. The National Guard of the Republic of Cyprus has already established a specialized mine action centre that will provide technical assistance during the demining process. The project for demining the Buffer Zone, which is expected to begin in the next few months, will be financed mainly by the European Union, which has already allocated €2.5 million to initiate the project.

We will continue assessing and considering our possibilities and will be ready to implement further steps in the direction just outlined. We hope that Cyprus will prove to be a successful case study, epitomizing the value of confidence-building measures and their wider implications, which transcend the boundaries of practical disarmament measures and have the potential to alter the parameters of conflict situations. We firmly believe that confidence-building is an important factor in fostering the conditions for political processes aimed at the settlement of disputes.

Mr. Paranhos (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to highlight the commitment to international peace and security of the countries members of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) — Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay — and the associated countries Bolivia, Chile and Peru. For cooperation in this field is an indispensable tool to achieve the integrated economic, political and social development of all peoples.

In that regard, we welcome the results achieved during the Organization of American States Special Conference on Hemispheric Security, held in Mexico City in October 2003. In the Conference's Declaration on Security in the Americas, the States of the region affirmed that

> "Confidence- and security-building measures and transparency in defence and security policies contribute to increasing stability, safeguarding hemispheric and international peace and security and consolidating democracy".

The countries of MERCOSUR and associated countries will continue to carry out joint military exercises among ourselves and in conjunction with other countries of the region. Likewise, we will continue developing bilateral initiatives that help build mutual confidence and enhance cooperation. Examples include the Common Standardized Methodology for the Measurement of Defence Spending prepared by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), at the request of Argentina and Chile, whose working group met on 6 August 2004, and the Argentina-Bolivia Standing Security Committee, which met for the first time on 30 September 2004. We also welcome Argentina's ratification in March 2004 of the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions, which has been in force since November 2002.

Finally, the countries of MERCOSUR and associated countries would like to recall our sponsorship of draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.52, entitled "Information on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms", as a contribution to strengthening dialogue on that important issue within the framework of the United Nations.

Mr. Meyer (Canada): As part of the effort to use our thematic debate to foster an exchange of views on specific issues of significance for disarmament and security, I wish to speak this morning to the topic of verification and compliance, which is a crucial underpinning of international non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament accords.

In order to persuade States to freely accept certain constraints on their behaviour as part of an international accord, it has long been recognized that one must be able to assure them that others are also abiding by the obligations set out in the mutual agreement. A good encapsulation of that concept, as well as of the interrelationship between verification and compliance, was set out in principle 11 of the 16 verification principles, which reads:

> "Adequate and effective verification arrangements must be capable of providing, in a timely fashion, clear and convincing evidence of compliance or non-compliance. Continued confirmation of compliance is an essential ingredient to building and maintaining confidence among the parties." (*A/S-15/3, para. 60*)

Developing the right verification approach to a given non-proliferation, arms control or disarmament challenge is not a simple task; nor is there a universal template that can be applied. Solutions will differ according to the specific case. In our view, however, one constant in the realm of multilateral agreements is an objective process that provides States parties with the information necessary to make substantiated judgements regarding compliance by other States parties. Ideally, such a verification capacity should be linked to a process for resolving disputes about compliance and taking remedial action to correct non-compliance.

Verification is a dynamic field in which practical experience, technology and diplomatic instruments are changing and developing. Think of the impressive capacities of the International Monitoring System of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization or the expanded coverage of International Atomic Energy Agency inspections under the additional protocols. We consider verification to be a field in which increased exchange of information, dedicated research and development programmes and creative institutional thinking should be pursued for the benefit of the international community. We would also like to see the First Committee and the United Nations as a whole pay more attention to issues of verification and compliance as one way in which to promote synergies among the multilateral non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament regimes.

A decade or more ago, expert groups established by the Committee contributed to the study of verification and its implications for the United Nations. More recently, the Disarmament Advisory Board offered views and recommendations relevant to this field. We believe that the further consideration of this topic in the United Nations context is warranted with a view to identifying future contributions or capabilities that would be complementary to current arrangements. Hence our proposal for soliciting the views of Member States in 2005 as input to a panel of Government experts to be established in 2006 to examine the issue of verification in all its aspects, including the role of the United Nations — a proposal designed to advance collective thinking on this subject.

Mr. Bar (Israel), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

Nationally, the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade is reviving research activity in the field of verification and compliance, and recently undertook a scoping study that compiled the views of a wide range of experts regarding existing problems and possible solutions. At the political level, the Canadian Prime Minister has spoken to the General Assembly about the role that verification can play in strengthening our multilateral systems and about the need to deal effectively with cases of non-compliance. Given that compliance concerns, if left unaddressed, can undermine international peace and security, we all have a stake in doing what is within our means and our mandate to contribute to the effectiveness of verification and compliance under the international accords that concern us all.

In the opinion of my delegation, it would be useful to include the topic of verification and compliance as a distinct part of our thematic debate timetable. Currently, we are obliged to raise that topic under the clusters of confidence-building and/or disarmament machinery — to which it definitely relates — but it really merits a sub-item of its own.

Mr. Faessler (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): As members are aware, Switzerland has always attached great importance to the implementation of obligations emanating from treaties or other instruments. Verification is a central element in terms of the credibility of such treaties and instruments. Verification is not just a means of control, but also a gauge of confidence and transparency and a means of assessing allegations of non-compliance.

That is why my country has always supported verification measures and their effective implementation. We actively support the activities of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Preparatory Committee for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. We are also pleased that an effective verification system has been established within the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development concerning conventional stockpiles and military activities. We have made experts and construction teams available to the operations of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) in Iraq. Switzerland has always advocated a verification protocol within the framework of the Biological (Toxin) Weapons Convention. We are convinced that a future fissile material cut-off treaty would be stronger and more credible with an effective verification system.

Switzerland holds the position that we must maintain the capacity and expertise of the United Nations — particularly within UNMOVIC — while respecting the fact that other organizations and treaties have been established and function well. We need to identify the shortcomings and complementarities of existing systems and to draw the necessary conclusions.

In the light of the current challenges, and in the absence of major progress in the disarmament negotiations, it is more important than ever before to preserve what has been achieved. Verification remains, in our view, an essential pillar of the international peace and security architecture. That is why Switzerland supports draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.33, introduced by the delegation of Canada.

Mr. Vasiliev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We should like to make a brief statement under the theme of other disarmament measures in the context of draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.31, proposed by India and entitled “Measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction”.

The escalation of international terrorism means that the international community must take adequate measures to reliably cut off terrorists' access to weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). As was stated at the 8th plenary meeting of the General Assembly by Sergey Viktorovich Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Russia is prepared to engage in very close partnership in that area.

We can deal with terrorists only on a multilateral basis, by combining our efforts and working together in solidarity. Our country was one of the initiators of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), and we are a party to the Proliferation Security Initiative and a sponsor of the Group of Eight Action Plan on Non-Proliferation. We have proposed a series of concrete, purely practical steps to help the world community strengthen the international legal basis for combating terrorism and make it a uniform foundation for everyone so that the laws of each Member State are consonant with international law and with the laws of other Member States.

Within the United Nations, at the initiative of the Russian Federation, work is under way on a draft international convention on the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism. The discussions on that document show that there is now much greater understanding of the need for the swift adoption of such a draft convention, since the measures it describes could serve as a real and powerful way to deter terrorists who seek to gain access to nuclear materials. In our view, the danger of WMD terrorism can be neutralized by eliminating the breeding ground for terrorism, further universalizing national and multilateral non-proliferation regimes, strengthening international verification instruments and introducing safe technologies for nuclear energy production in States that renounce excessive arsenals and military programmes that could undermine the military and political balance and could thereby provoke an arms race.

In the light of those considerations, I should like to express our support for the draft resolution introduced by the representative of India on measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. The adoption of that important and urgent draft resolution would assist us in our common efforts to combat international terrorism.

Ms. Fegante (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation wishes to speak on the theme of the observance of environmental norms in the drafting and implementation of agreements on disarmament and arms control. The Government of the Argentine Republic observes environmental standards in implementing its disarmament and arms control agreements. Over the past year, preventive measures with regard to environmental impact were taken in the destruction of stockpiled firearms and anti-personnel mines.

First, two processes for the destruction of firearms were used, destroying a total of 12,265 items. In conformity with existing legislation, the destruction methods employed conformed with the recommended environmental norms. Steel weapons were melted in electric melting furnaces, and weapons made of antimony alloys were melted with the addition of slag at high temperatures.

Secondly, on 4 December 2003, with the destruction of the last 20 units, the final phase of the national plan for the destruction of the stocks of anti-personnel mines held by the armed forces was completed. A total of 89,764 anti-personnel mines have thus been destroyed, in fulfilment of our disarmament obligations under article IV of the Ottawa Convention on landmines.

The various stages of planning and implementation of the national plan incorporated a number of measures for preventing environmental damage. First, as part of safeguards against possible accidents in the transport, handling and destruction of explosive materials, the relevant national legislation was complied with. Destruction was carried out in outdoor detonations. Following that method, military camps where munitions have regularly been destroyed were selected so that only land that had already suffered an environmental impact was used. In that context, it should be noted that within those camps, wasteland areas were generally used. Their high-salt-content soil is able to immobilize toxic elements released by the explosion; there is little or no vegetation; and they are extensive in size. This facilitates the temporary migration of local fauna to alternative habitats and thus diminishes the impact on wildlife. In areas adjacent to detonation sites, livestock was removed to the distances recommended by competent veterinarian personnel.

In addition, the choice of primary explosive, based on the advice of the Escuela Superior Técnica, took into account the need to have a high explosive charge that would generate the smallest possible quantity of residue. The maximum detonation charges were determined based on the limitations of each site and in compliance with recommendations derived from seismographic studies. The design of the shafts and the placement of the primary explosive ensured that there would be no discharge of explosive material, thus preventing adjacent terrain from becoming contaminated.

Finally, during on-site operations, adjacent land was prepared, and fire control systems were made ready to prevent the outbreak of fires.

We realize that this statement was a little technical, but we felt it was important because this is the first time that we have presented information on this subject. We believe it is a practical issue that could be of interest to all delegations.

Ms. Borsiin Bonnier (Sweden): I wish to make some remarks about my Government's support for the development of a standing verification, inspection and analysis capacity within the United Nations with regard to weapons of mass destruction.

We believe that treaty-based solutions are and should be the norm. The treaties are our first line of defence in all such cases, but we should recognize that there are shortcomings and that there is a need for enhanced tools at the global level. That, I think, is very much recognized in the treaties themselves. For example, in the context of the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Statute of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) grants the Board of Governors the power to put cases of non-compliance before the Security Council and the General Assembly. States parties to the Biological Weapons Convention also have the power to bring such cases before the Security Council and the General Assembly. The Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons can also bring non-compliance cases directly to the General Assembly and the Security Council. And, as we all know, the Security Council itself has addressed the issue of weapons of mass destruction many times and has defined the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction as a threat to international peace and security. As I recall, that was first done in a presidential statement (S/23500) in 1992.

What Sweden would like to see developed is a better United Nations capacity to meet such possible challenges. We would like to see — and I underline this — not a new cumbersome and large bureaucracy, but a simple roster of highly qualified experts that would be available to the United Nations — and at short notice. For some such experts, we could draw on existing expertise within the Organization and also within Member States.

We feel that making available such a standing capacity would enhance the legitimacy of the United Nations and its credibility with respect to verification and analysis of issues of this kind. It could be used in cases of non-compliance that have gone beyond the treaty arrangements themselves. It could be a place to turn to for countries that feel that they are being accused of being in breach of weapons of mass destruction agreements, and it can be a place countries can turn to if they feel that, for whatever reason, they want to change and come clean and to make a legitimate demonstration of their change of policy.

We feel that such a capacity could be very easily arranged. We feel that the international community would gain from this, particularly countries that have not fully developed their own technical means in this respect.

Mr. Stephens (Australia): In Australia's view, delegations should give careful consideration to the current state of the multilateral disarmament machinery and to realistic opportunities for revitalizing it. We are all aware of the problems in the Conference on Disarmament and in the Disarmament Commission — bodies that, when functioning are two essential components of the disarmament machinery — and the reasons why those forums have been unable to do substantive work for some time. We see no value in dwelling on those problems.

Leaving aside those two bodies, however, there are ways in which we can improve the effectiveness of the multilateral disarmament machinery. The Australian delegation is gratified to see the way in which the First Committee is embracing the initiative to improve its methods of work. We have seen substantive improvements introduced over the past two General Assembly sessions in that regard, leading to the more efficient operation of the Committee.

We support the drive to introduce an interactive component to our discussion and to adjust the agenda to make it more relevant to contemporary security concerns. We would be pleased to see even greater use made of relevant international and non-governmental organizations, whose participation in Committee debates adds value to our work. We acknowledge, of course, that such initiatives must proceed on the basis of consensus, at a speed with which all delegations are comfortable.

We are pleased to see many delegations heeding the call to introduce shorter, more streamlined, action-oriented draft resolutions. We believe that it would be timely for sponsors to consider also the value they get from — and, often, the administrative burden they impose by — requesting the views of Member States via various draft resolutions. With so many such requests made and, in some cases, little value gained from the ensuing reports, it is little wonder that the Member State response rate is so low.

The Chairman returned to the Chair.

We also believe that there is a preponderance of requests for groups of governmental experts. If the issue is mature enough, such groups can be a useful and productive way of taking forward the consideration of important disarmament and security matters. If not, they can be unproductive and can impose a large financial and human-resource burden on the United Nations. Australia would be comfortable placing mandatory limits on the number of groups of governmental experts agreed upon each year. There could also be alternative ways to take forward particular issues, for example by referring them to other United Nations groups, such as the Disarmament Commission, for discussion. This action could serve the dual purpose of revitalizing discussion within the Disarmament Commission and saving the Secretariat the burden of establishing an ever-increasing number of groups of governmental experts.

Ms. Fogante (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like now to speak on agenda item 65 (r) entitled "Measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction", and 60, entitled "Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security".

The Government of the Argentine Republic welcomes the Security Council's decision to play an active role in the fight against the threat posed by the possibility of non-State actors acquiring weapons of mass destruction. Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) represents an important advance in ensuring international peace and security. It further consolidates the comprehensive approach being taken to the problem, building on the actions undertaken in 2001, with the adoption of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) and the establishment of the Counter-Terrorism Committee under the auspices of the Security Council.

In accordance with paragraphs 3 and 4 of Council resolution 1540 (2004), the Government of the Argentine Republic reported on the international instruments, legislation and procedures in force for the exchange of information and for ensuring the coordination of national, subregional, regional and international efforts to combat that threat. In this regard, the Argentine Republic, as a State that does not possess weapons of mass destruction, has adopted a number of measures to regulate the transfer of materials that may be used for the manufacture of such weapons, thereby preventing their diversion to non-State actors.

Argentina is a party to international instruments regulating the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, including the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and the Convention on Nuclear Safety. Argentina also participates in the following export control regimes: the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Zanger Committee, the Missile Technologies Control Regime and the Australia Group.

The provisions, guidelines and criteria approved in those international instruments have been incorporated into out domestic legislation through decree 603/92 and complementary provisions, which establish controls on the transfer of nuclear, chemical, bacteriological and missile material, equipment, technologies, technical assistance and services. The decree also establishes a national commission for the control of sensitive exports and military materiel, consisting of the various State agencies and bodies concerned with the regulation of the materials in question.

The commission has the power to grant export licenses, import certificates and delivery confirmation certificates. Export applications are analysed on a case-by-case basis, and decisions are taken on the basis of

Argentina's firm commitment to non-proliferation and in the context of current international realities, as well as the domestic and regional context of the destination country.

The Argentine Government firmly believes that export control regimes, together with the universalization of international disarmament instruments, represent a first step towards preventing the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by terrorist groups. For that reason, our country would welcome the international community's achievement of the universalization of those instruments, with a view to coordinating responses to this growing threat.

Turning to advances in information and telecommunications in the context of international security, the Argentine Republic believes that the issue of information security involves a number of problems, whose resolution represents a real challenge because of their growing complexity — a result of the technological advances themselves.

The main problems can be divided into three categories: attacks targeting the information itself; misuse of information resources; and cyber-crime. With respect to information, new technologies make it increasingly difficult to ensure confidentiality, integrity and availability — the three principal characteristics of information. At the same time, with regard to the problems of information itself, there are two main areas which require special treatment: personal information, which must be administered with the greatest care in order to preserve individual privacy; and information relating to organizations — whether commercial or industrial organizations, or public bodies or agencies — the dissemination, modification or loss of which might be prejudicial to the achievement of economic, social or political objectives.

Another problem, which is often underestimated, is the misuse of computer-based resources: their use for purposes other than those authorized, or the abuse or wasteful use of those resources. For example, the mass spreading of viruses and other kinds of interference through the Internet, with all the necessary countermeasures that that involves, results in additional expenses that far outstrip any original costs.

Lastly, new technologies are providing new opportunities for crime — both crimes that might be regarded as traditional, which exploit new technologies, and new forms of crime that result directly from technological advances.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): Following the adjournment of the formal part of this meeting, we shall proceed to an informal exchange of views, with the participation of Under-Secretary-General Abe and the Directors of the three regional centres for disarmament.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.